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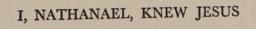
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I, NATHANAEL, KNEW JESUS

By VAN TASSEL SUTPHEN



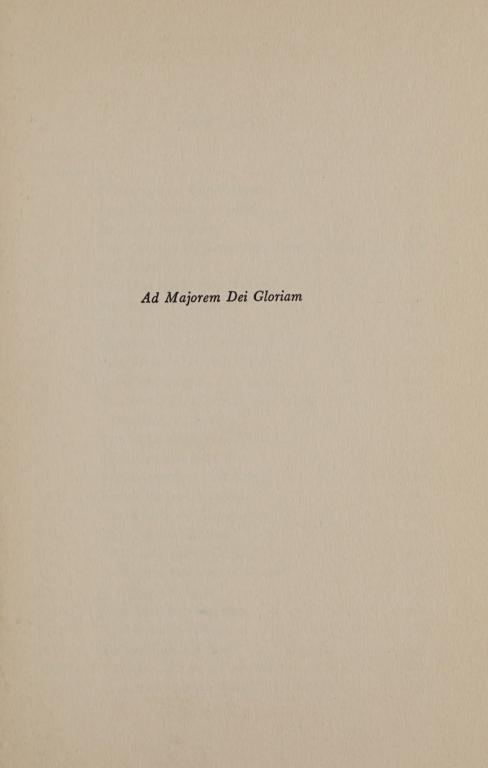
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PREFACE

HERE are many puzzling problems which confront anyone who attempts to re-create the earthly life of Jesus from the comparatively meagre source of material at our In seeking to set in order the facts enumerated in the four little pamphlets known as the canonical Gospels, we are confronted at every turn with variations, inconsistencies, and even apparent contradictions. To most of these debatable questions no definitive answer has ever been given, or ever will be. What is the true sequence of the various events in the life of our Lord? Nobody knows. Did His earthly ministry extend through nearly three years, or was it confined to two, or even to a bare twelvemonth? It is impossible to say. What was the exact personnel of the Apostolic band, and what were their interrelationships? There are almost as many theories as there are Apostles. Shall we erect our edifice upon the foundation of the hypothetical Marcan Logia, or shall we postulate the ultimate authority of an indeterminate New Testament Q? Who can speak ex cathedra?

However, out of the textual discrepancies of the four Gospels, one fact of capital importance emerges, the essential unity of their Central Figure; it is impossible to doubt that the very human Tesus of the Synoptists and the mystical Word of St. John are one and the same person. We may sympathize with the feelings of the champions of verbal inerrancy, their natural dread lest modern scholarship should destroy something very precious and irreplaceable. But is it not true that the portrait is of infinitely greater value than the framing? The four Evangelists may differ as to detail, but they are unanimous in presenting Jesus Christ as the Divine Saviour of the world, and that is the vital matter. The Holy Scriptures are truly inspired of God, but their setting down was committed to human hands. Therefore, inconsistencies and even divergencies may occur, but we can be sure that nothing necessary to our salvation has been lost or materially altered; whatever of truth it has pleased God to reveal, that He will likewise perfectly preserve; nothing can ever be confounded through human ignorance, frailty, or malice. And so He remains—"Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever."

It seems allowable to employ the light of reason in deciding

between conflicting theories; provided that the biographer has a definite purpose to subserve, he should be at liberty to select such of the material as may best fit that purpose, the one essential being that the unities are kept in view and that no actual violence is used in the welding together of the several components.

Let us, for example, endeavour to draw up an authoritative list of the friends of Jesus, that intimate circle which we call the Glorious Company of the Apostles. First, we have a group of figures that, so to speak, are done in the round; we may view them from all sides, and they form the statues in our Gospel gallery. Yes, we can affirm that we really know St. Peter, St. John,

and Judas Iscariot.

In the second category, the characters are not so clearly differentiated; they are no longer statues but portraits done in the flat, two-dimensional representation. In this class we place SS. Andrew, James, Thomas, Matthew-Levi, Philip, and our own protagonist, St. Nathanael (Bartholomew). We know them pretty well, or think we do; churches are named in their honour, and they are all members in good standing of the Christian

hagiology.

But how about the third set—SS. James the Less, Judas Lebbæus (Thaddæus), and Simon Zelotes (the Cananæan)? Are they anything more than names, pale abstractions whose wandering shades must be reclothed with flesh and blood if ever they are to stand upon their feet as real men? Judas (not Iscariot) maintains a quasi status under the cognomen of St. Jude, and I believe there is a Philadelphia church which has adopted St. James the Less as its patron saint. But whoever heard of a fane bearing the distinctive name of St. Simon Zelotes, at least in this country? At the best, he is bracketed, somewhat hesitatingly, with St. Jude. Finally, the controversies concerning the blood relationships of the Apostles to each other and to our Lord are endless and unconvincing.

It is traditionally allowable to consider St. Nathanael, my narrator, as synonymous with Bartholomew, but the further details of the portrait are frankly imaginative; so little is definitely known about him that I may be pardoned for letting my fancy take a wide sweep in order to conceive a personality which shall

be consonant with my general purpose.

What is this purpose? Simply to present Jesus Christ as He may have appeared to a man of His own day, a man who was a member of the intimate Apostolic circle, a man who had left all to follow Jesus; and who yet was slow to accept His Messianic claims, and still more unwilling to see in Him the "Word made

flesh." And this, despite St. Nathanael's famous but, to my mind, wholly impulsive declaration: "Rabbi, thou art the Son

of God; thou art the King of Israel."

Accordingly, I draw the portrait of St. Nathanael as that of a man decidedly different from the other Apostles—the scion of a wealthy Sadducean family, educated in the philosophical centres of Alexandria and Athens, familiar with the social life of the imperial capital, interested primarily in literature and art, of an aloof and aristocratic temperament, constitutionally sceptical of anything outside the circle of his intellectual attainments; in a word, a first-century Modernist. He follows Jesus solely because he loves Him; only through slow degrees, by painful steps, does St. Nathanael come to see in Jesus of Nazareth not alone the Son of man but also the incarnate Son of God.

My purpose further requires that St. Nathanael should be the last survivor of the Apostolic band, and that (at the urgency of St. John the Divine) he should be moved to set down the record of his companionship with the Master in order that men of a later age, men of like habit of mind with himself, might be enabled to discern in Jesus the brightness of the Father's face and the ex-

press image of His person.

Since the canonical Gospels are already in existence and at the nominal writer's disposal, St. Nathanael is entitled to regard his own memoir as purely supplementary; he may and does refer to the accepted Evangels to fill up the gaps in his narration; and he feels free, on the other hand, to amplify the existing material from the storehouse of his personal recollections. For instance, in describing the summoning of SS, Peter and Andrew, and of SS. James and John from their business as fishermen, St. Luke says that, entering Simon Peter's boat, the Master "prayed that he would thrust out a little from the land. And he sat down and taught the people out of the ship." Since St. Luke does not tell us what Jesus said on this particular occasion, my biographer ventures to insert here the parable of the draw-net. Moreover, it must always be borne in mind that the Evangelists never attempted to keep a definite diary of the events in our Lord's public ministry; they were not interested in presenting a strict chronological sequence (particularly as concerns the greater part of the discourses and parables); they merely set down what of His teachings they remembered or possessed from other contemporary origins. Accordingly, St. Nathanael must be justified in the separation of many of these teachings from their apparent context. The result may suggest a mosaic where bits of particoloured stone are assembled from various sources and fitted together to form an harmonious picture. This method cannot claim to be historical; it is frankly selective, but done with a positive purpose in view—the presentation of Jesus as a veritable human being and the Elder Brother of all men. Finally, never is St. Nathanael guilty of the offence of putting words of his own invention into the mouth of Him concerning whom even His enemies confessed: "Never man spake like this man." Such a liberty is not only in the worst possible taste, but it invariably de-

stroys the verisimilitude it is intended to create.

The critic who is primarily concerned with mere facts may take exception to St. Nathanael's use of certain affirmations from the Nicene creed, pointing out that the document in question was not in existence in the first century. Quite so, but will anyone seriously contend that on some definite date in the year 325 A. D. certain men sat down and proceeded to fabricate out of thin air the articles of Christian faith known to us as the Nicene symbol? Is it not reasonable to assume that the source material was in being at a very early period, and that Nathanael felt free to borrow whatever he needed of this current verbal coinage? Creeds are organic in their structure and they grow, as do other living things, through a process of assimilation and elimination, until they arrive at full maturity. The Nicene creed itself was not actually completed and formally adopted until many years after the first council of Nicæa. And so Nathanael is justified in taking his own wherever he may find it.

It may be argued that some of St. Nathanael's comments upon the various incidents recounted—for instance his observations and conclusions in re the stories of the Woman with the Issue of Blood, the Rich Young Ruler, and the Man Born Blind—are not consonant with his avowed attitude of scepticism. But it must be remembered that St. Nathanael dictated the story at the very close of his own life; unconsciously, then, his views would be coloured by his later convictions as they took shape out of the final revelation of Jesus as the Second Person of the Trinity.

Furthermore, as St. Nathanael's whole theorem is postulated upon the gradual emergence of his belief in our Lord's divinity, his amanuensis does not capitalize pronouns referring to Jesus until *after* the great enlightenment; it seemed proper that the MS. itself (exclusive of Prologue and footnotes) should bear witness to St. Nathanael's change of attitude, following the celebration of the first Christian Eucharist at Emmaus.

In direct quotations from the Holy Scriptures the punctuation, spelling, and capitalization of the A.V. are retained. However, the words interpolated for the sake of clearness are not italicized

since long usage has made them an integral part of the textus receptus.

For my chronology I have adopted the Reverend J. M. Fuller's Harmony of the Four Gospels. This sequence was prepared after a careful study of such eminent authorities as Keim, Tischendorf, Zumpt, et al. While it cannot claim to be the final word on the subject, at least it presents a workable hypothesis, and it fits my purpose. The only important divergence lies in my making the walk to Emmaus take place on Easter Monday afternoon, thus following instead of preceding the first appearance of Christ to the assembled disciples. This change is purely arbitrary; moreover, St. Luke says distinctly that the incident occurred on the first day of the week. St. Matthew is indefinite; he records: "After that he appeared in another form unto two of them, as they walked, and went into the country." It must again be remembered that the Jews were notoriously weak in their time sequences, and that the Evangelists were not so much concerned with the keeping of historical journals as in the setting down of imperishable truths. For my own purpose, the transposition is essential, as the reader will discover for himself. to the persons of the two disciples, I choose to identify St. James the Less with that son of Alphæus who was also known as Cleopas or Cleophas (Clopas). Some authorities insist that Cleopas is not the same man as Cleophas (Clopas), but there are no grounds for any positive pronouncement. It would seem natural that St. James the Less, one of the Twelve, should be an actor in that memorable drama rather than the otherwise wholly unknown Cleopas. And my protagonist, St. Nathanael, becomes the unnamed companion of James purely by poetic

One final consideration: the enigma of Judas Iscariot. Many theories have been propounded, but none have found universal acceptance. The traditional explanation, that Judas was moved by avarice to betray his Master and friend, is hardly adequate; even two thousand years ago thirty pieces of silver was not such an immense sum as to tempt a man to commit the blackest of treacheries. Then there is the assumption that Judas honestly believed in Jesus as the Messiah; but, being blinded by patriotic fanaticism, he sought to force Jesus' hand by delivering Him to His enemies; He would thereupon be obliged to use His supernatural power to set up a temporal sovereignty in whose usufruct Judas would have his full share. A plausible argument, but it is just a trifle too neat and well made to be wholly convincing. Really, it might better be postulated of SS. James and John

whose ambitions for distinction in the Kingdom so soon and so surely to be established are clearly stated in the synoptic Gospels.

Doubtless the hypothesis I offer—that of demoniacal possession—may seem at first sight quite too fantastic, and any evidential proof is obviously out of the question. The idea was suggested by a single sentence in St. John's Gospel (13: 27): "And after the sop Satan entered into him." Unless we regard these words as mere metaphor may we not assume the possibility of an outside and malign personality taking possession of the wretched man, and using him as an instrument for all the powers of darkness? And if that could happen at this particular time (the Last Supper), why not before and perhaps on many previous occasions? But even if we postulate Judas as a victim, it is not necessary to conclude that he was a mere automaton and therefore not responsible for his actions. In the working out of the theory Judas is made fully aware of his moral lapses while under the "possession." Moreover, Nathanael begs him to seek succour from the Master, who had abundantly demonstrated, in many like instances, His power to cast out evil spirits. But, alas! the same agency which hurled Lucifer from the heights of heaven to the depths of hell becomes the root of the Iscariot's ruin—the mortal sin of pride. Judas persists in asserting that he can conquer his adversary in his own might; he will not humble himself to ask aid from the only One who is able and willing to deliver him. For even the Almighty cannot save a man against his will; the right of free choice, of self-determination, continues to be inviolable. And so Judas goes to his own place—the lowest circle of Dante's Inferno—and the eternal verdict is registered: "Good were it for that man if he had never been born."

There is, of course, no historical evidence for my special interpretations of St. Nathanael himself, Joseph of Arimathæa, Mary Magdalene, and Judas Iscariot. Let me again emphasize my contention that I am not attempting to write critic-proof history; St. Nathanael's narrative may be more fairly described as inferential biography, a purely imaginative recreation of the life and times of Jesus the Messiah.

Acknowledgments and thanks are due The H. W. Gray Company, New York, for permission to reprint, in the Epilogue, several poems which originally formed part of the text of the author's two Church cantatas, "The Eve of Grace" and "The

Paschal Victor."

VAN T. S.

Morristown, New Jersey. Epiphany, MCMXLI.

PROLOGUE

T is the last day of the month Tishri in the year 98, counting from the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ; and I, Nathanael, otherwise called Bartholomew, having just returned from the graveside of my dear friend and lifelong companion John (surnamed, and rightly so, the Divine), am sitting on the stone-flagged roof of my great-grandson's house at Ephesus; the twilight falls apace, and I watch the slow uprising of the evening star over the darkling purple of the Ægean Sea.

And I am very old and very weary.

How hard to realize that of the company of the Twelve whom the Lord called to His service, two generations and more ago, I alone remain! But it is even so; one by one, having fought the good fight and kept the faith, they have been caught up into the eternal glory, and now behold the King in His beauty in the land that is very far off. Yet to-night that delectable country seems nearer than in the former time, and I am content to wait; He who called to me sitting under the fig tree, at my boyhood home in Cana of Galilee, will not be unmindful of His own at that last great assize when He shall come again in His glory to

judge both the quick and the dead.

I who was the least of the Apostolic band am now the last of that Glorious Company. Strange! for John, the Beloved Disciple, lacked half a dozen years of the age to which I have attained. It must be that his flaming spirit consumed itself in the labours more abundant of his declining years, the enrichment of the immortal treasure-house of Christ's Religion with his three Epistles General, the Book of the Revelation, and the Fourth Gospel. How well I remember that meeting, barely four-andtwenty hours ago, when John and I sat face to face for the last time and talked of those three marvellous years during which we walked with the Master through the green valleys of Galilee and over the iron-bound slopes of Judæa; of those never-to-be-forgotten days when we saw His mighty works and listened to words such as no man ever spake before or ever shall speak. The chill of early autumn was in the air, and John looked very frail to me as he sat on a rug heaped up with pillows, a camel'shair shawl over his knees, and the rays of the sinking sun falling levelly on his bloodless face. Yet his voice was firm and resonant as of yore while we remembered of Him who had brought us out of darkness into the clear shining of day; and still again of the abiding presence of the Comforter in our hearts and lives.

"How incredible it sounded in that far-off time!" I mused

aloud. "How unbelievable even to-day ----" I hesitated.

John looked at me, his lips curved in that familiar, slow, all-comprehending smile. "Unbelievable!" he echoed. "Yes, truly, were it not for the certainty which still remains with us," and he pointed to the copy of his Gospel lying on the little table at his elbow; I leaned forward and read aloud:

"And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth." My voice shook as I concluded the tremendous affirmation. But I knew my eyes were smiling as they

answered to my friend's quiet scrutiny.

"You and I," said John slowly, "are the last of the eye-andear witnesses; it is our bounden duty to pass on that certainty to those who shall come after us. I have done my part," he continued, his glance resting momentarily on the little pile of manuscript, the writing tremulous with age and yet so clear and legible. "Now, my Nathanael, it is for you to do yours." I looked up in surprise. "But surely," I protested, "the la-

bours of John-Mark, of Matthew, and of Luke the physician have raised the pillar of testimony to its appointed height, and now your Gospel supplies the copestone. What is there left for

me to do?"

"Have you forgotten," he asked, "that you were the very last of our company to perceive the full stature of the God-Man whom the world knew as Jesus of Nazareth? They called Thomas the doubter because he said: "Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe." But you, Nathanael, waited yet a little longer before your eyes were open to behold the King in His glory. Have you forgotten?"

I felt my face reddening under John's gaze. "No, I have not

forgotten," I answered.

John picked up the text of his Gospel. "Let me read you," he said, "what I have written concerning your calling to the

fellowship of His disciples. Here it is:

"'Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.

"'And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see.

"' Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and saith of him, Be-

hold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile.

"'Nathanael saith unto him, Whence knowest thou me? Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee.

"'Nathanael answered and saith unto him, Rabbi, thou art

the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel.

"' Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou? thou shall see greater things than these.

"'And he saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending

and descending upon the Son of man."

"But according to your own words," I insisted, "I was not blind to the heavenly vision. Did I not proclaim Him Son of

God and King of Israel?"

"Because He saw thee under the fig tree," countered John. "Nay, my Nathanael, I am not reproaching you for being slow to see and understand. You did indeed perceive in Him the wonder-worker and the prophet, you hailed Him as the pattern and example of that righteousness to which all men might attain, the sonship of the Everlasting Father; you even trusted that it had been He who should have redeemed Israel, the long-expected Messiah. But you could not and did not recognize in Him that 'one Lord Jesus Christ, * * * Begotten of his Father before all worlds, * * * Very God of very God, * * * Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven.' For always, at the back of your mind, lay the question: Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?"

It was true; I had no word to say.

"And still you forsook all to follow Him—home and kindred and affianced wife, the ease of a sheltered life and the promise of an outstanding career. How astonishing! For you, Nathanael, were a Sadducee of the Sadducees, and the frigid rationalism of your sect was bred in your very flesh and bone. You felt the contempt of a trained thinker for the extravagances of human emotion, for the superstitions of the vulgar, for the easy-going credulity of the crowd. And then a disturbing thing upset your complacence. Philip tells you of Jesus of Nazareth, that small, mean town out of which it seemed impossible that any good thing could come. However, you—the logician—consented to go and see.

"You came, you saw, and you elected to remain in the service of this young and unscholarly teacher. Again, how astonishing! As an upright man yourself, an Israelite in whom there was no guile, you could not but recognize the lofty morality of Jesus; you might even have anticipated Pontius Pilate in declaring: 'I find no fault in this man.' And yet, and yet, why should you have become His disciple? The flower of a perfect life is indeed a lovely thing to look upon, but it is not the righteousness of the Law as given by Moses, that very core and centre of our national existence. Now, you had been apprenticed to the service of this same Law, every instinct of nature and training bound you to continue in that honourable vocation. Why, O Nathanael, were you weak enough to inhale the intoxicating flavour of that fugitive, wayside blossom, and thereupon forget and forsake all that a life of orthodox compliance might have given you? I will answer my own question, dear friend. You loved Him; is it not so?"

I looked away, half-ashamed of the tears which were stinging

my eyelids.

"It was your heart and not your head which constrained you, my Nathanael. You could not know then that love is the fulfilling of the Law, that love is born of God, and that in Jesus was the express image of the Father Almighty. And yet, through sunshine and through storm, you continued to follow Him and to learn of Him; until, in the fulness of time, the irresistible alchemy of love revealed to you this same Jesus as that Word which was in the beginning with God; and yet was made man."

There was a long silence, broken only by the chirping of the

locusts in the olive trees of the garden.

"He has forgiven me, John," I said at length. "He knew that it was not hardness of heart but weakness of vision which delayed for so long my recognition of His Godhead."

"Yes, He forgave you, fully and freely. Still you would wish

to make what amends may be in your power?"

"Surely."

"Then you will write out the story of your fellowship with the Master during the years of His earthly ministry. I mean the record of your personal experience, the slow growth of your faith; from seed to leaf, and from blossom to fruitage. Not for your own comfort and satisfaction, my Nathanael, but in order that you may help other men of your peculiar mind to know the truth as it is in Jesus. There will be many of them in the long ages of time to come; men who acknowledge the exceeding beauty of the life-pattern laid down by the Master, who may

even wish to follow it in its outward aspect, but who are unwilling or unable to enter into the obedience of His spirit. Will you do this, Nathanael, not seeking great things for yourself, but wholly out of the love you bear to our adorable and ever-blessed Lord? Will you do it?"

"I will do it."

"It is a promise?"

"It is a promise," I repeated as our right hands clasped.

The night had fallen, the evening breeze had an edge in it, and I could hear Miriam, my friend's great-granddaughter, clattering in her wooden clogs down the outer stone staircase which leads from the upper part of the house; she will be coming to assist the old man to his couch, drawn up before the cheerful fire of cypress logs in the inner room. A dear and gracious child is Miriam, but just at this moment I could not have borne to exchange speech with any other human being than my beloved John. Hastily rising to my feet, I leaned over and kissed him on both cheeks. "The Lord be with you," I whispered. "And with thy spirit," came the response, so low and weak that I could barely catch the words.

Our eyes met and fell apart; then I passed, a little stumblingly, down the garden path and into the rustling, grey-green shadows of the olive wood.

That same night John died.

To-morrow I shall return to my bishopric at Colosse, accompanied as far as Hierapolis by my great-grandson Eleazar. There I shall be met by Philemon, the second of that worthy name, who will see me to my home. For the past three years Philemon has been acting as my coadjutor, relieving me of that care of all the churches in our province which had grown too great a burden for my strength. Frequently in the past Philemon had urged upon me the writing of my memoirs of the Great Adventure; and always, on one pretext or another, I had put him off. He will be overjoyed to hear that I have now given my promise to John to perform the task; doubtless I shall call upon him to act as my amanuensis, since my right hand is almost useless and my sight is failing.

So be it. I have given my word and I shall keep it.



I, NATHANAEL BAR-TALMAI

O my relatives and friends in general I am Bartholomew (Bar-Talmai), or the son of Talmai; to my mother and chosen intimates I have always been Nathanael (or Theodorus, as it would be in the Greek, meaning the gift of God); moreover, it was under that name that I entered the service of the Master. And so, for the purpose of this narrative, let it be Nathanael.

My father was a native of Capernaum situated on the western shore of the Lake of Gennesaret. Via Maris, the great trade route from Damascus to Ptolemais, or Acco, on the sea, ran through Capernaum, and there was a constant succession of caravans bearing silks, ivory, spices, rugs, metal work in gold and silver, and other treasures of the opulent East. Talmai acted as middleman in diverting a moiety of these luxuries to the rich shopkeepers of Tiberias, the capital of the province; also he was engaged, on his own account, in exporting to the western markets the local products of the Galilæan countryside—grain and olive oil, balm and tragacanth gum, pistachio nuts and almonds; and, most important of all, immense quantities of dry-cured fish. He must have been an excellent business man, since he was able to amass a sizable fortune in a comparatively few years; at his death, when I was seven years old, my mother, Zilla, was reputed to be a wealthy woman.

In the second year of her widowhood my mother decided to return to her former home at Cana of Galilee, a six-hours' journey for a moderate walker in a southwesterly direction from Capernaum. Cana is in the hill country, but the valleys are fertile, their soil being especially favourable for the cultivation of vineyards and olive orchards. It is a picturesque land, and from the elevated plateau on which our house stood it is possible for keen eyes to catch a glimpse of the sapphire waters of the Sea of Galilee twelve miles away, while to the northeast the view is dominated by the rugged Horns of Hattin. Of the neighbouring towns, Sepphoris, the old capital, lay to the northwest, while Tiberias was due east. Toward the southwest the only consid-

erable village was Nazareth some four miles away. But nobody ever went there, it being an insignificant place in the social sense, and populated exclusively by peasants, artisans, and small farmers. Was there not a current saying among us: "Can there any

good thing come out of Nazareth?"

My mother's property covered a large area and our house was the principal residence in the town, its gardens and fig orchards being famous for their extent and beauty. In a way, ours was a small household, since I was the only child, but we maintained a veritable army of dependents and servants; the establishment, as a whole, compared favourably with the fine estates and villas of the Roman and Herodian aristocracy at Tiberias-on-the-Lake.

And so the years slipped comfortably away until I was close upon thirty and still an idler in my mother's house, albeit making some small pretence at relieving her in the management of the family property. I cannot, however, charge myself with more than the ordinary and evanescent follies of youth. Our position in the community, backed as it was by money, would have afforded me an easy entrance into the circles of golden adolescence at Tiberias, but I never cared to apply for admission. Perhaps my residence for several successive winters at Alexandria in Egypt, where I studied Hellenistic culture under the great Philo and the Grecian masters, may account for my habitually aloof attitude. Fortunately I had a friend at Tiberias, Titus Ouintus Sulla, an elderly and well-to-do official of the court, who shared my enthusiasm for the Western classics and who possessed a number of the almost priceless manuscripts. His library was put at my disposal, and I was even allowed to take home an occasional codex for more intensive study or for the purpose of making a copy for myself. With these intellectual interests to occupy me, I had small leisure for trivial amusements or the mere killing of time; it was rather a question of taste than of ethics. And then one day, in the year 779, after the founding of the city of Rome (A. U. C.), the placid current of daily existence suffered an interruption; my uncle Joseph of Arimathæa arrived from Jerusalem, announcing that he had hired a house in Cana in the hope that our clear and equable climate might benefit his asthmatic condition. And with him came his twenty-year-old daughter, my cousin Lilli.

Hitherto, my experience with women had been almost entirely negative. The intimacy between a widowed mother and an unmarried son is apt to be of an unusually close and affectionate nature, and Zilla had a full share of maternal jealousy; no other woman, if she could help it, should be permitted to contribute to

the happiness and well-being of her boy, her only child. Personally I gave small thought to the matter so long as I was comfortable and enjoyed sufficient leisure for my favourite studies. But Lilli, a dark-eyed slip of a girl with an indescribable tinkle in her laugh, was different, and slowly, very slowly, I came to realize that difference; almost without conscious volition I found myself seeking her society. But there was a full ten years' disparity in our ages, and I could not flatter myself that she regarded me in any other light than as an agreeable companion—

perhaps as an elder brother.

Our family was of the sect of the Sadducees, and my uncle belonged to the priestly caste, being head of the Tenth Course, that of Sheckaniah; also he was an influential member of the Great Sanhedrin. Advancing years and the burden of his asthmatic infirmity had brought about a partial retirement from active work; but he still retained a strong interest in ecclesiastical affairs, and it was a grief to him that he had no son to succeed to his honours and follow in his footsteps. Therefore, it was no great surprise to me when he made the suggestion one afternoon—we were sitting in a little grove of pomegranate trees near his house—that I should enter the priesthood as the family representative. I demurred, pleading that my mother needed me at home and that my tastes were literary rather than theological.

"Yet you are a son of Aaron," he countered, "and you have told me of your researches in the Mishnah and the Midrash at

the rabbinical school at Alexandria."

"More from curiosity than conviction," I insisted. "My real interest lies in the direction of the Gentile classics."

My uncle frowned. "And you an Israelite!" he exclaimed. "Ah, but we Sadducees are liberal in such matters. I have no stomach for the endless splitting of hairs by the scribes and doctors."

"I am not asking you to become a Pharisee," retorted my uncle. "It is your political career which I have in mind. Herod Antipas——"

"That fox!"

"If need be we can match him in cunning, my Nathanael. And we men of the world should not waste breath in calling names. The Sadducean party is useful to Herod, and we owe our present pre-eminence to his favour. Why not set sail with a fair and following wind?"

"Meaning what?"

"Annas, of course, will never have a chance to regain the office of High Priest, and Caiaphas grows ever more difficult to deal with; he is eternally at odds with the Procurator about some trifle. First, the quarrel over the legionary ensigns, and now the Corban——"

"The free-will offerings of the pious for the Temple treasure!

Why should it be diverted?"

"The city needs a new system of water supply, and one must be broad-minded in matters which concern the public welfare. After all, what does a compromise signify?" and he made a dramatic gesture, that of one hand washing the other.

I must have looked my disgust, for he added hastily:

"Nay, you misunderstand me, Nephew. I meant only that Israel should use her enemies and not spend time and strength in fighting them. Rome must be cajoled, coddled, cozened; then, when the Day does come—conquered. Brains not brawn are our true weapons."

"Well?"

"But the brains must be of the first order. And who is there among the younger men in the Council to whom we may look for leadership? Now, if you, Nathanael, were one of us—no, I am not a flatterer, nor am I answering to the call of our common blood. I am nothing more than a faithful son of Abraham, but my beard is fully grown and I look at men and things through the untinted pane. If ever the glory of the Shekinah is to shine forth as in the ancient days, if ever an heir of David's body is to reascend the throne of Israel, if ever the Holy City is to lay aside her garments of heaviness and arise from her ashes—well, all these things may come to pass, but only when we find a man upon whom the mantle of Elijah hath fallen. For where the sword of Judas Maccabæus has failed, the Arm of the Lord shall triumph, and triumph gloriously. Where is that man? How shall we know him when he comes?"

"The Messiah ——"

"Vainest of vain dreams. We Sadducees hold only to the oracles pure and undefiled, and neither the Suffering Servant of Isaiah nor the Branch of Zechariah is to be predicated from the Law as given by Moses. A Star may arise out of Jacob, but we shall never see it so long as we wander in the moonshine of prophetic dreams. It may be that I come to call you, Nathanael, as Saul the son of Kish was summoned, to be the captain of Israel. Take care that you do not repeat the cowardice of Saul, and be found hiding among the stuff when the call arrives."

I had no words to answer; then, to my relief, I noticed that someone was waving a white cloth from the door of Joseph's

house.

"It is Lilli!" I exclaimed as I caught a glimpse of a light, feminine form. "She wants us to come home."

We rose and walked slowly along the upward winding path.

"And again," spoke up my uncle with startling suddenness, "it is not good for a man to be alone, and you are still unmarried. Have you never thought of changing your single estate, Nathanael?"

"Not definitely," I answered, with more of hesitation than of

strict veracity.

"Now, there is Lilli," he continued. "You have been at our house pretty frequently of late, and I can hardly flatter myself that it is my society you crave." He wagged his grey beard at me and there was a saturnine gleam in his eyes.

"But, Uncle—I don't quite——"

"Lilli is a desirable young woman, even if I, her father, do say it. And who should be better informed upon such a matter?" I agreed discreetly.

"And she will make some man a good wife. Why not you, Nephew? But perhaps you already have spoken for yourself."

"No, I have not," I answered quickly. "We are good friends, very good friends; nothing more."

My uncle again fixed me with his glittering gaze.

"She is but—is but a child," I stammered. "I am far too old and staid for her bright youth."

"Nonsense, Nathanael. She is above all a dutiful daughter,

and if I made known my wishes in this matter ----"

"Not on my account, Uncle. I will have no maiden's coerced affections."

"That is another of your accursed Gentile notions picked up at Alexandria. Lilli is of the Chosen People, and she will never refuse the appointed path. But come, we make far too much of what should be a very simple situation. Since you, Nathanael, are not unwilling—but we will talk again of this matter. And of that other. Your arm, Nephew; these uneven stones make diffi-

cult walking."

Lilli was awaiting us in the cool, dark living-room. There was a silver bowl full of green figs on the table and presently she brought in a pitcher of thick, clotted cream; we dipped the figs in our several portions of the latter and ate—a feast worthy of a royal palace. Lilli said little, but her laughter rang through the room like a peal of silver bells. What a lovely creature she was! And kind; almost too kind, I thought miserably. "Kind because she cares not." However, I kept these reflections to myself, and talked of indifferent matters.

I thought of many things as I walked homeward, particularly of the two astounding offers which I had just received from my Uncle Joseph: a career as a leader of the powerful caste of the Sadducees—and Lilli. "It is a foolish dream," I said half-aloud. "When her eyes chance to meet mine, her gaze is as clear and untroubled as that of a child. She is a woman grown, but, as yet, not awakened. And, honestly, I doubt if I have the power to cause a moment's quickening of her maiden breath, to call even the faintest colour to her cheek. Assuredly, if her father so commanded, she would become my bride—and then—well, why not? Love may come after marriage as truly as before, perhaps in even more enduring fashion. Why not take what good the gods provide?"

A fine Arabian horse stood champing his bit in the courtyard of our house, and I recognized the saddle of dark-red Syrian leather and the silver stirrups. My cousin Philip must be here, having ridden over from Bethsaida; I hurried in to greet him.

THE MAN FROM KERIOTH

HILIP was awaiting me in the alivah, or principal upper room of the house; he arose from the divan as I entered and confronted me smilingly. It had been a couple of months since our last meeting, and I cast an appraising glance upon his face and figure, the latter a little stouter than of yore. A pleasant-appearing youth, this cousin of mine, with his curling chestnut hair, ruddy cheeks and bold blue eves—a true son of our Galilæan highland stock. But surely he had put on weight, and it might have been still more noticeable were it not for the fact that he lived well up to his name—Philip, lover of horses—and spent most of his waking hours in the saddle, acting as factor for Barak-Ezra, horse dealer of Bethsaida, who had a contract for supplying remounts and pack animals for the Roman garrison at Capernaum. At one time Philip had farmed his own patrimony, but the venture proving increasingly unprofitable, he had been forced to take service in Barak's prosperous and business-To be frank, Philip was a little dull of unlike establishment. derstanding, but everybody liked him and so he was faring better in his subordinate capacity than he had ever been able to do in the days of his independency. Our meeting was cordial as ever.

"Here it is late in autumn," he remarked, "and yet as hot a day as ever midsummer can show. Selim was all in a lather when I rode into your courtyard, and I have just this moment pulled the sheepskin blanket from his loins. I myself am all but melted," and he ran a hand through his great yellow beard, laughingly exhibiting the little beads of moisture which clung to

the tips of his fingers.

"Let me have ewer and basin brought," I said, and was about to clap my hands for a servant.

"No hurry, no hurry. I intend to spend the night if you can spare me a couple of mats and a coverlet."

"Assuredly."

"You see," he continued, "I had expected to meet a man here who is bringing me a string of hill horses for draught use. A man from Nazareth. Have you seen anything of the convoy?" " No."

"Then he will be here early in the morning. An odd fellow, this Judæan, but generally dependable. I daresay he has been delayed over the bargaining with the country folk."

"Do I know him?"

"Not likely, since he lives at Nazareth, a dull hole in your estimation. As I say, the family are Judæan; his father, Simon, came to Galilee a number of years ago and bought a small press for extracting olive oil. But the business did not suit Judas——"

"Is that his name?"

"More precisely Judas Iscariot—Ish-Kerioth or the man from the little village of that name in Judæa. An odd fellow, as I am telling you. After his father's death, and being quite alone in the world, he sold the press and became a factotum of sorts, and a go-between in any and every line of trade and barter. That is why he is acting for us in this business."

"I never heard of him."

"Why should you, my Nathanael? You and he must be as far apart in matters of taste and feeling as Dan from Beersheba. A moody, ill-conditioned man with whom very few people can get along at all. Yet I have little trouble with him; it may be that, after his queer fashion, he likes me."

"As everybody does."

"Flatterer! Well, you can form your own opinion in the morning. In the meantime, I hear the rattling of pots and pans which suggests that supper is preparing. If I may now be offered

the accustomed hospitality of your house ----"

I took Philip to my own room, and summoned a servant to assist him in the matter of ablutions and toilet. My mother welcomed him heartily, and was especially interested to hear all the family and general news, Philip being an accomplished purveyor of countryside gossip. After her retirement Philip and I spent the evening on the roof and under the light of a particularly refulgent hunter's moon. His tongue clacked incessantly, and I had only to listen and be amused. And then, suddenly, a new and deeper note crept into his voice. "This John the Baptist!" he ejaculated, almost explosively. "The world is gone out after him; he is setting us all by the ears!"

"Still another false Messiah?" and I fear there was an edge

of contempt in my tone.

"But that is just what he does not profess to be. The burden of his discourse is always: 'There cometh one mightier than I after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose.'" "What then is his mission?"

"He proclaims that the kingdom of heaven is at hand, that all should repent and be baptized by him in Jordan—for the remission of their sins."

"You say that he does not pretend to be the Holy One of Israel?"

"Nay more; he expressly denies it. A special deputation of priests and Levites came down from Jerusalem and questioned him closely. 'I am not the Christ,' he declared. They asked him if he were Elias and again he answered: 'No.' And yet the one thought remains fixed in every man's heart: 'Is this the Christ?'"

"Strange!"

"He speaks of himself as a voice crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.' He tells the people: 'The axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire.' And the multitude believe him. From all Judæa and Jerusalem itself, and from the countryside about Jordan they are thronging to hear him; they confess their sins and are baptized in the river."

"The common folk of course; they are always running after

some new thing."

"Again you are quite wrong. The people are of all sorts and conditions of men—Pharisees and Sadducees, scribes and doctors of the Law, Jewish publicans and Idumæan soldiers. There is even a sprinkling of elegant idlers like yourself, Nathanael. I mean aristocrats of Herod's court, philosophers from the various schools, and not a few women, as gorgeous as peacocks in their perfumed silks and tired hair; their ears, arms, necks, and ankles flashing with jewels of ruby and pearl and topaz and emerald. Never have I beheld a sight so astonishing."

"You mean that you yourself have been one of this-shall I

say mob?"

Philip coloured high as though he were again but a small boy caught pilfering his mother's jam pots. "I happened to be near the place—on a matter of business," he explained haltingly. "I went to hear him out of pure curiosity—and—well, you know we horse-breakers are a rough lot, and I may have been lax of late in my religious observances. But once in the prophet's presence——"

"What sort of a person is he?"

"A wild man and looking as though he had just come out of the desert. Tall and gaunt, clothed in a camel's-skin tunic with a leathern girdle about his loins. Some say that he is of that peculiar sect, the Essenes. I doubt that, since they would not allow the locusts which form his chief meat. The wild honey, perhaps, but surely not the locusts, for the Essenes will eat nothing which is not of the vegetable world."

"And you listened to him, Philip?"

"I had no choice in the matter. He seemed to be speaking to me alone, and his eyes ploughed into my inmost soul. And so, when he offered the baptism of remission I could not refuse, knowing that I too am a sinner. That day I was the first one to go down into the water. Are you astonished, Cousin? Well, I

was amazed at myself-am yet."

I fell to musing greatly. Not that there was anything in Philip of actual wrongdoing; decency and honesty were essential elements in his character. But, like other young men of his class, he had enjoyed life and had taken it easily; light-minded was the worst that could be said of him. And yet the words of this wild man from the desert had touched and changed him, words as compelling in their nature as though they had been coals taken from the High Altar of Sacrifice. A miracle then. And again I wondered.

I looked up at the sky and noted that the familiar evening constellations had sunken to the horizon's rim; it was growing late. "We will talk again of these matters," I said as I rose from the rug on which we lay together. "I suppose that your

Judæan friend will be here at an early hour?"

"Certainly by sunrise."

"Come then and I will show you where you are to sleep." I conducted Philip to the cubicle which had been made ready for him, and then retired to my own room. But already the cock had crowed twice before unconsciousness claimed me.

I must have overslept, for the morning sun was streaming through the open casement when I awoke; I could hear the trampling of hooves in the courtyard and Philip's cheerful laugh. I went to the window and looked out. Yes, the Judæan had arrived with a score of shaggy Galilæan hill ponies in his string, tied halter to tail in a double row; there was a hubbub of squeals and neighs, and an occasional kick or nip from some of the more coltish youngsters. I made a hasty toilet and went down. Philip and the man from Kerioth were checking off the list of animals, and I paused a moment, forbearing to interrupt affairs of business.

So this was Judas Iscariot! I glanced at him carelessly, lit-

tle dreaming how well I was to know him in the years that were to come. Then I looked again and with a growing attention; certainly this was no common man if appearances went for any-

thing.

There is an insistent tradition in the Church of to-day which represents Judas as having flaming red hair. How the misconception should have arisen I cannot tell, and it is true that more than sixty years have passed since that bright autumn morning in Cana of Galilee. But my memory of two generations back is more dependable than that of yesterday, and I can see him now as I saw him then—a picture in dead black and white. Indeed, his hair, so far from being carroty or auburn, was of that intense blue-black shade which seems darker than the ebony coat of the raven; it was abundant but somewhat coarse of texture, and the thick line of evebrows arched downward and met above the bridge of the nose. His beard was rather scanty, but there were matted pads of hair on the boldly projecting cheek-bones, and little tufts at the nostrils and in the ears; moreover, a thick, velvety thatch covered the backs of his large and spade-like hands. His skin was of a dead white pallor and his lips were clay-coloured. And his eyes—as hard and brilliant as though carved out of jet!

Broad-shouldered and stocky of frame, he was dressed in a knee-length tunic of white woolen secured at the waistline by a girdle of black leather, and the thongs of his sandals were of the same sombre hue. His outer garment, or cloak, was a rectangular, seamless piece of coarse cloth, so cut and folded as completely to cover his chest and back, but left open at either side for the purpose of giving the arms free play. The morning air was chilly, and he had flung across his shoulders a square of goatskin dyed sable; there had been a slight shower at sunrise and the rain-drops were still glistening upon its swart surface. The turban, too, was of coal-black wool, resembling the inky head-dress of the wild shepherds of the Median desert. Of phylacteries and the orthodox fringes worn by the religiously inclined, there was not a trace. A strange and even sinister figure, this man from Kerioth, and I shivered slightly as his dark and roving gaze met mine; it was as though a cold wind had suddenly begun to blow between my shoulder-blades.

"My cousin Bar-Talmai, otherwise Nathanael," explained Philip, and the Judæan spoke the customary words of salutation; his voice was deep and mellow, the most likable thing about him.

Philip, having completed his inspection, counted out the agreed-upon price in gold and silver coinage of the Roman mint,

and handed the money to Judas. The man from Kerioth took the pieces, with but the briefest glance of appraisal, and stowed them away in a leather pouch thonged to his girdle.

"I must start for the garrison post at once," said Philip.

"Will you ride over with me, Cousin?"

"Not to-day, Philip." I hesitated and then went on resolutely: "To be frank, I am curious about this wild man of yours, the Baptist. I have it in mind to see for myself what all this

pother may mean."

Philip stared incredulously and then smiled. "Why not?" he assented. "It will be worth your while, I assure you, and I shall be interested to hear how my desert prophet appeals to that cool, sceptical mind of yours, so lately nurtured in the philosophic groves of Athens and amid the noisy wrangling of the Alexandrian schools. Go and God be with you."

"Where is he to be found?"

"At the ford of Beth-Abara, the 'House of Shipping.' The longer route, but I think the better, is by way of Nazareth and Nain; thence down to the Jordan. Judas here is returning to Nazareth, and he will set you on your road if you accompany him."

The man from Kerioth nodded, being, as ever, chary of his speech. Simeon, Philip's servant, came up with his master's horse, and the cavalcade prepared to depart. Philip, swallowing a gourd of goat's milk which a maid had brought from the dairy house and tucking a handful of dates into the bosom of his cloak, bade me an hasty farewell and rode away; I was to be sure and let him know what I thought of the prophet and his message. "For perhaps you are not entirely Hellenized," he concluded, "and will discover something which is more than foolishness even to the Greeks." The string of ponies, shepherded by Simeon, clattered out of the courtyard and disappeared in a cloud of white dust adown the eastward road. I turned to the Iscariot and offered food and drink. But he declined, explaining that he had already broken his fast. I ordered my riding mule, Donna, brought up from the stable, and went into the house to inform my mother of my intended journey and to have a provision of clean linen and food packed in my saddle-bags.

When I returned Judas was in waiting, sitting in the huge pack-saddle, resembling camel furniture, which almost hid the tough little hill horse who bore it. A rude equipage indeed with its substitutes for stirrups—two dependent ropes ending in wrought-iron rings through which the big toes were thrust. It looked uncomfortable enough, but custom and usage make light

of everything. My own mount was a large, big-boned mule such as are bred only in the Iberian peninsula, jet black in colour and beautifully gaited; the animal had been a recent gift from my mother and was the particular envy of all my equestrian friends.

Side by side for a short distance and then in single file, we rode the few miles to Nazareth. The highway was rough and we hardly exchanged a word until we came within sight of the white limestone houses of the town standing out from a sea of greenery—cactus hedges, fruit orchards, and vineyards. Really Nazareth was a charming place, nestling in its little amphitheatre of low hills with a line of precipitous cliffs marking the further descent to the great plain of Esdraelon. On this morning in late autumn most of the floral beauty had departed, but there were still the stiff blooms of asters and marigolds to take the place of the gorgeous hues of spring and summer. Truly this despised Nazareth and the more distant prospects were enchanting—to the northeast the snow-capped dome of Mount Hermon seventy miles away; to the east the long slope of Mount Tabor, covered to the crest with the grey-green of olive trees and the darker hues of carobs, oaks, and terebinths; and yet beyond, across the sunken valley of the Jordan, the blue line of the Gilead range; to the south the battle-scarred plain of Esdraelon where Gideon and Barak met with victory and King Saul with defeat, where Ahab built his palace of ivory and cedar, and Naboth lived, unconscious of the jealous eyes that coveted his fruitful vineyard; a score of miles to the northwest the huge bulk of Carmel rearing itself like some fabled sea-monster from the azure deep of the Great Sea; everywhere the wide-spread panorama of Hebrew history—Israel's glory, and Israel's shame.

"Yes, some good may come even out of Nazareth," quoted Judas with a dash of sour emphasis on my abstracted silence.

But I only smiled in reply.

Through the straggling village we rode towards the tiny market-place. But just before we arrived there Judas indicated that we should turn up a side street for a short distance; he explained that he wished to speak to a friend who lived in a house larger and more comfortable-looking than its neighbours, set in a little pleasance of pomegranate and almond trees, its flagged walks bordered by hedges of oleander and myrtle.

"Who is it?" I asked.

"Jeshua Bar-Joses," he answered. "But Joseph, a carpenter by trade, died nearly a score of years ago, and his sons and daughters by an earlier marriage are all married and have homes of their own. Jesus remains with his mother, Mary, and helps the oldest son, James, to carry on the family business. It will be only a moment's delay, and I can then set you on the Nain road."

Judas dismounted while I remained in the saddle, looking over the low wall of whitewashed stones which bounded the garden. There was a woman seated on a bench by the door and a young child lay on her lap; with the briefest of greetings Judas brushed past and entered the house. I noticed that he paid no attention to the mezuzzah, the small, folded piece of parchment traditionally attached to the door-post and bearing the name of the Most High. Among the pious it is the custom to touch lightly the mezuzzah on every occasion of entering or leaving the dwelling, and then to kiss the fingers which have been in contact with the Holy Name. But Judas was either indifferent to this

orthodox procedure, or too preoccupied to observe it.

I glanced again at the woman with the infant. She must be past middle life, for the locks of hair escaping from her white linen coif were of that delightful silver-grey tint which ennobles even the plainest and coarsest of features. Not that this woman was unattractive in appearance. Her heart-shaped face was without a blemish of any kind, and there was not a wrinkle to be noted on the high, white forehead. Her features were pleasingly regular, and the eyes, which shone with undiminished fire under the level brows, were of sapphire blue, alive with the hue of high heaven's arch. Her lips were full and firm, but ever ready to relax into smiling curves as she bent over the sleeping child. Presently the baby stirred and uttered a little querulous cry, whereupon he was gathered quickly into the strong, protecting arms; here was a perfect picture of the Eternal Mother as she sat there in the warm autumnal sunshine, the noble, matronly figure clothed entirely in white, save for the mantle of celestial azure about her shoulders. I gazed at this vision of gracious womanhood until I felt constrained to turn my head away, fearing lest she might be annoyed by such close scrutiny. But I might have spared myself the trouble, since she had no thought of anything else in the world than the infant in her arms, now fully awake and smiling up into the kind eyes.

Judas came out of the house, evidently perturbed and excited. He exchanged a few words with the lady of the blue mantle, whose placidity was in no wise ruffled by his impatient queries; she answered him quietly but with a finality which was plainly intended to close the discussion. And so Judas clattered down the paved walk and hoisted himself into the saddle without an-

other word.

"Your friend's mother?" I asked as we turned our steeds.

"Yes, she is Mary, widow of old Joseph."

- "That cannot be her own child."
- "Assuredly not. The boy is her grandson—or, more accurately, the child of Mary's stepdaughter, Ednah."

"Did you see your friend?"

"No. It seems that Jesus left the house before daybreak, explaining that he was going on a considerable journey. Mary did not say where, but I can guess."

"Perhaps on the same errand as myself."

"Without doubt. And that means I must accompany you to Beth-Abara. Outside of the yearly pilgrimages to Jerusalem for the week of the Passover, Jesus has never travelled more than a Sabbath-day's journey from Nazareth except in my company. What does he know of men and the ways of the great world? Nothing. Therefore I must see to it that he suffers no misadventure among the mob of curiosity-mongers who are flocking to see and hear this ridiculous strolling prophet. What can Jesus be thinking of!" and Judas spat upon the ground in the extremity of his agitation.

"The world is gone out after him."

"But this John is a fanatic who talks of the wildest things—repentance and the washing away of sins in the yellow waters of Jordan. Faugh! Or even if his message be true for the rabble, it could have no meaning for Jesus who is goodness itself. Yes, and always has been."

"You have known him for some time?"

"We came from Kerioth to Nazareth just after the return from Jerusalem when Jesus, as a boy of twelve, became a 'Son of the *Torah* or Commandment.' That was eighteen years ago."

"Then he is now a man of thirty."

"Yes. I am the older by some four years, but we were friends at first sight and have remained so. Joseph died shortly afterwards, and so the household was a large one—the four boys, James and Joses and Simon and Jude; also the two girls, Miriam and Ednah. And, of course, her own son, Jesus. But the stepchildren soon married and went away, and Jesus was left alone with his mother."

Judas wished to purchase a supply of food for the journey and so we halted at the market-place. At one corner stood the carpenter shop, hardly more than a thatched roof supported on four posts. A few ox-bows, chests, tables, and wooden winnowing shovels were stored in a large cupboard at one end, and the air was full of the penetrating fragrance of cedar-wood chips and

shavings of the resin pine. At the work-bench there stood a tall man engaged in shaping a piece of timber with an adze; I took him to be James, the senior of the reputed half-brothers. He worked with great energy, but there was a wrinkle of displeasure on his high, bald forehead; perhaps he was wondering what had become of his usual assistant. A gaunt figure of a man, but a not unpleasing countenance, save that his eyes were set too closely together, the infallible mark of obstinacy and narrowmindedness.

Judas was lashing a pair of bulky saddle-bags in place as I rode forward to join him. We mounted, and presently we left Nazareth behind us and were descending to the lower valley, fertile as was ever that delectable country of patriarchal days, "where Napthali dipped his foot in oil." As we travelled onward, I again brought up the subject of this Jeshua Bar-Joses and his youthful days. "Tell me something more of Jesus," I "Was he always what you have called him—goodness itself?"

"Assuredly," answered Judas. "More than that, he was a worker of wonders when he was a boy."

"Did you witness them? With your own eyes?"

"No, they all happened before I came to Nazareth. But there are boyhood friends of Jesus still living who speak of the strange things he did with the birds; in particular, how he fashioned them out of moistened clay—larks, and starlings, and swallows. As fast as he finished a 'bird' he would toss it into the air; immediately it would take wing and fly away. And there were scores of like prodigies."

"Hum! And now tell me this, Iscariot. Why has he never performed any of these marvels for you, his closest friend? It doesn't seem reasonable. Moreover, you as a sensible man must know that the laws of Nature are immutable. Prodigies and miracles do not happen; they are merely invented to astonish old women and the feeble-minded. I fear you have never read De Rerum Natura, by the great Roman philosopher Lucretius."

"I know nothing of your philosophers," returned Judas with unexpected heat. "But I am neither a foolish woman nor a crack-witted man. And I tell you again that Jesus is a wonder-

worker: I am sure of it."

"Not of your own experience. That you have admitted." "I can't argue with you, Bar-Talmai. But I am certain that he could have done even mightier works than these had he chosen to exert his will. If you could once see him and speak with him, you would understand what I mean."

"Really!"

"I tell you the power is there—in the glance of his eye, in the uplifting of his hand. I know it. Moreover, here is a strange thing. Back of our village rises a high hill. The climb is toilsome and few attempt it; it remains unfrequented save for the wild goats and the conies."

"I remember noticing it—well?"

"For years Jesus has been accustomed to make this hill his solitary retreat. And no one was ever invited to accompany him, not even I. Whenever work at the shop was slack he might be seen striding up the rocky path; frequently he would spend whole nights there on the summit."

"Doing what?"

"Who can say? All I know is that he found there some source of strength, some secret renewal of his energies. For when he came down from the heights, I was always conscious of that sense of power—visible in his face, audible in his voice, clothing him as with a garment of price."

"A power unused, since he did no mighty works. You are a

poet, Judas; your imagination runs away with you."

"I know what I know," continued Judas stubbornly. "And so will you, Bar-Talmai, for all your fine learning—sooner or later."

"Perhaps so," I assented indifferently, and the subject dropped.

We passed through Nain without stopping; thence onward to the southeast, with Mount Tabor on our left hand and Little Hermon on the right. At noon we halted for a brief meal of barley cakes and dried figs. Already the road was becoming crowded with travellers making for the same destination, the ford of Beth-Abara. Our progress was consequently slower than before, and it was not until the ninth hour of the day that we had traversed the deeply sunken valley of the Jordan and were within sight of the river.

Here was an amazing spectacle. Ordinarily a caravan track wound through the thick oleander brake, but this was travelled only by traders doing business in the Greek cities of the Decapolis and by the rigidly pious who, in journeying to Jerusalem, preferred the longer trans-Jordanian route to the possibility of contamination from the unorthodox Samaritans. But to-day the river bank was teeming with activity, a veritable human ant-hill; in every direction the canes and oleanders had been crushed flat by the impact of hurrying feet, and the multitude was so

solidly massed on the approaches to the ford proper that it was

difficult to obtain a point of vantage.

We left our riding animals in charge of a boy, and started to worm our way through the throng as best we could, Judas cleaving a passage with his broad shoulders and none too gentle hands; I, being spare and agile, followed closely in his wake.

As Philip had told me, the crowd was a motley one—yokels from Galilee and Samaria jostling haughty ecclesiastics from Jerusalem; Roman soldiers from the lake garrisons; and hard-featured, painted women from the stews of Sepphoris and Tiberias; a congeries of peasants, officials, aristocratic idlers, curiosity-seekers, crying children, braying asses, and barking dogs; everywhere a confusion incredibly confounded; over all a cloud of white, choking dust. Never had I endured such torment; and if Judas had not dragged me along bodily for the last furlong, I doubt if I should have had the courage to see the business through. But finally we won clear.

There was the prophet standing on a sand-bank in the stream a few yards from shore. A grim man, this John the Baptist, with his shaggy camel's-skin garment hardly distinguishable from the hairy chest and thighs which it covered. A thin, hatchet face with beetling eyebrows, and a skin burned red and black by the desert sun. His voice was penetrating as a sword; even now he was speaking, and the crowd stopped their laughter and noisy

bickering to listen.

"The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord * * * every mountain and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked shall be made straight and the rough places plain. * * * Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance. And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father; for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. * * * I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I. * * * Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor; and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

For a moment or two the great, booming voice was silent, and a shiver passed over the crowd, like to the wind in a field of

standing barley.

"What shall we do then?" asked a man in the dress of a shepherd. He spoke as though voicing the troubled indecision of his fellows.

"He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise."

Another man pushed to the front, and this time his neighbours made ready and scornful passage, as though contaminated by the very proximity of his person. I recognized him as one of our national renegades, a publican from Capernaum by the name of Matthew-Levi (Bar-Alphæus). "Master, what shall we do?" he exclaimed.

"Exact no more than that which is appointed you," came the swift reply. The bystanders gave vociferous and jeering approval; and Matthew, flushing darkly, melted back into the obscurity of the crowd.

"And what shall we do?" demanded a soldier, evidently one

of Herod Antipas's Idumæan bodyguard.

"Do violence to no man," answered the Baptist, "neither ac-

cuse any falsely, and be content with your wages."

Somehow I was oppressed by a sense of disappointment. After the burning words of the prophet's exhortation, the practical application of his message seemed little more than cold ethics; surely any teacher among the Separated Ones—the Pharisees—could have voiced a similar morality; yes, and would have gone further in admonishing such flagrant sinners as tax-gatherers and mercenary soldiers to forsake their infamous vocations. This John Baptist might call transgressors to repentance, but he could not point out to them a way of life in any wise superior to the precepts of the Law as given by Moses.

I turned to Judas. "Have you found your friend?" I asked

impatiently.

"No, but I am certain he must be here. I think I shall

mingle with the crowd and look for him."

"I can't help you there, since I don't know him. Suppose that I go back to where we left the animals; you can join me later."

Judas nodded and moved away, while I walked the two furlongs or so to the little knoll where the boy was awaiting our return. I paid and dismissed him; then I shook out some forage for the mule and pony, and sat down to survey the scene before me. The people were as thickly massed as ever; and, one by one, the converts waded into the stream and were immersed by the prophet in the yellow flood. And suddenly I asked myself: "Why am I not among them?"

A baptism unto repentance! But I am not like my cousin Philip, and my colder nature is not to be moved so easily. More shame to me perhaps, but I could feel no soul-shaking sense of sin separating me from God. And why should I flee this wrath to come? I am a Sadducee of the Sadducees. For if there be

no resurrection from the dead, if this present life be all, what could anything matter? And then I recalled what John had gone on to say—that he was but a forerunner, that one mightier than he should come after him, whose baptism should be with fire. But this, if true, could be nothing less than a cleansing of the whole man, a life impregnated and made fruitful by the outpouring of the very spirit of God. And again I mused and wondered.

I looked up, conscious that the warmth and brightness of the day had lessened sensibly. There was a wrack of clouds in the sky, cast up from the Great Sea, and a distant muttering of thunder. For at this season of the year the *anti-pazzat* winds had begun to blow, and violent storms were not uncommon.

Why should Judas be so long in joining me?

There was a stir among the multitude, and I saw the tall figure of a man proceeding alone to the water's edge. The distance was too great for me to make out his features or the details of his dress. But he walked steadily and majestically erect; moved by a common impulse, the throng gave way to afford him passage. Without an instant's hesitation, the stranger entered the stream and stood before the prophet.

I fancied that John seemed startled as he looked at the new-comer. A few words passed between them, and then the Baptist put his lean hands upon the shoulders of the neophyte and plunged him bodily beneath the surface of the water. Again I strained my eyes in vain. But surely something happened as the dripping figure reappeared—a streak of silver light darting down from the sky upon his head; once more the roll of far-off thunder.

The two men emerged from the river and walked away, conversing earnestly. Presently they reached a secluded spot near a cluster of tamarisk bushes, and stood there quite alone.

The crowd had begun to drift away from the river, intent upon resuming the homeward journey. In the forefront came Judas and with him two men whose dress proclaimed them to be scribes from Jerusalem; they were arguing excitedly, even angrily.

"The passing of a cloud—perhaps," offered one of the scribes.

"I saw it distinctly," insisted Judas. "A dove as white as snow lighting upon him. And then a voice——"
"Mere noise. Or at best a jumble of unintelligible words."

"And it said: 'Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased.'"

"Pure foolishness!"

"How about you, Nahor?" asked Judas, appealing to his other companion, an elderly man.

"I heard nothing at all," mumbled Nahor. "But then I am very deaf," he added apologetically. Judas scowled at him.

"There was a voice," put in a woman; her eyes rolled wildly and she seemed distraught or, at least, unduly overwrought.

"It spake those very words; I heard them."

There were cries of yes and no from other disputants among the crowd, and I stepped forward; the discussion was becoming acrimonious. "The clouds have been rolling up from the sea this last hour," I suggested. "And see how black the sky is getting. It thundered, you remember. And so it was easy to have been mistaken about voices and words." And this time Judas looked darkly at me.

The throng, as though fearing a wetting, melted rapidly away, leaving Judas and me alone. I could see that he was still displeased at my common-sense explanation of the mystery. But

he said nothing.

"Was that indeed your friend?" I inquired.

"Yes, it was Jesus. He went away, I think, with the Baptist."
"They were standing near that solitary carob tree a moment

ago."

The figure of the wild man was clearly defined against the skyline, but there was no one with him. Then, suddenly and far to the southward, there moved a speck of white.

"Come!" shouted Judas, mounting in haste. "I must see in

what direction he is going."

We rode along rapidly. The storm was rolling back on itself; we should not have rain after all. Now the white head-dress worn by Jesus was plainly in sight, and Judas pulled down to a

slow walk. "I don't want him to see me," he explained.

An hour later Judas halted. "It is certain now," he said, "that Jesus has turned into the southern track which leads to the wilderness of Judæa, on the west of the sea that is dead. I think he will make for the gorge of the Fly-god, and I must follow him, since it is a wild and dangerous region. He knows the place I have in mind, for we made a journey there a few months ago when I was looking for certain rare mineral salts."

"It is a long ways," I ventured.

"A two days' journey. What can Jesus be thinking of?" he ended moodily. Judas took the wooden frame of the pack-saddle from his pony, and cast it aside. He unbuckled the sheepskin pad on which it had rested, and laid it with his saddle-bags. Then, removing the bridle, he gave the animal a sharp slap with

the reins across the loins. "Begone!" he commanded. The little horse tossed his head and started in a gallop upon the backward trail. "He'll find his way home easily enough," commented his late master.

"Do you really mean to go after Jesus?" I asked. "And will

you not need food?"

"My saddle-bags are stuffed with parched corn and dates.

If necessary, I know where to find other provision."

"How will he manage? He has absolutely nothing with him."
Judas spread out his hands in helpless resignation. "I can't say," he confessed. "When Jesus takes on these solitary moods, I must not approach him. I can't say why, but I don't dare to do so. All I may venture, is to be somewhere near at hand on the chance that he wants or needs me.

"Of course, Bar-Talmai, you will turn back at once," he continued. "When you reach Nazareth to-morrow you might tell Mary that Jesus and I are going on a journey which may take

many days. Then she will not be over-anxious."

"And your own family or friends? A word to them?"

"There is no one to care," he answered shortly. Without another word, he flung the sheepskin over his shoulders and picked up the saddle-bags. I made him the parting offer of a lump of figs which he accepted with a mere grunt of appreciation; then he went swinging down the rocky path, and I saw him no more. But far, far away and topping a lofty ridge, I caught glimpse of a solitary man walking resolutely; one last ray from the sun sinking in the gold and crimson west shone full upon his white turban, and turned it into a crown of glory.

I slept that night in an inn at Endor, and the next morning I passed through Nazareth. Mary was not at home, but I left the message from Judas with gloomy Brother James who did not appear over-pleased that the carpenter shop should be deprived indefinitely of the services of an able craftsman. But there was nothing to be done about it.

And so I came back to Cana and my pleasant home—to my

books and manuscripts, to my mother; and to Lilli.

JESUS OF NAZARETH

having been moved to make the journey by reports which had reached me of important archæological discoveries in the ancient tombs of En-gedi on the western shore of the Great Salt Sea. Travelling to Jerusalem by the shorter or Samaritan route, I passed the city without stopping and spent the second night in the small village of Bethlehem. It was after dark when I arrived, but with the first coming of dawn I was glad to exchange the stuffiness of the posting inn for the freshness of the

morning air.

It was a familiar scene upon which I gazed, but one which has never failed to thrill me—the panorama on the east embracing the tremendous gulf of the arabah, or desert, with the steely expanse of the Dead Sea in the middle distance; and still farther on the tawny limestone and black basaltic cliffs of the mountains of Moab, cold-grey in tint under the slowly lightening dawn. And then, suddenly, the red limb of the sun appeared upon the eastern horizon, and flooded the world with a rising tide of life and warmth and multitudinous colour. The drab waters of the sea changed to a brilliant sapphire blue, the grey of the far-off Moabitish hills yielded to splashes of rose and orange and mauve, and the dun desolation of the wilderness proper glowed a coppery-red under the caress of the sun-god—what an amazing spectacle!

I stood at the very edge of the central Judæan plateau, as a sailor upon the deck of his ship or a sentinel upon his lofty castle rampart. Beneath my feet the limestone escarpment broke precipitously to the great sink, the chaos of the desert of Jeshimon, the Place of Devastation, as it was known to our forefathers, the Mosaic Wilderness of the Scapegoat. And, as I looked, the words of Jeremiah the prophet came to my lips: "I beheld the earth, and lo, it was without form and void. I beheld, and lo, there was no man, and all the birds of the heavens were fled. I beheld, and lo, the fruitless place was a wilderness * * * at the presence of the Lord, and by his fierce anger." Upon my face came the first puff of desert air, already heating up under the

rays of the ascending sun—" a dry wind of the high places in the wilderness." I looked again, and saw little swirls of vapour upon the surface of the dead waters; soon they would unite to form the mists which, on a sunny day, hang closely above the sea and veil from sight its salt-encrusted shores—the abomination of desolation, the ancient site of those wicked cities of the plain, the smoke of whose torment ascendeth forever.

It grew hotter and hotter as my mule picked her sure-footed way down the difficult bridle path. Gone now were the scrub and dwarf oaks, and the brown, scanty herbage of the upper plateau; here was nothing but vellow, scurfy soil with a few scattered thorn bushes and succulent creepers that somehow contrived to find sufficient moisture in these arid sands to maintain their existence. Fantastic ridges of disintegrating rock ran in all directions; and, between them, gullies in which the heat lay like a suffocating blanket. Down and down I went into the heart of this incredible depression which the Arabs call El Ghor, or the Rift, the very bottom of the earth, accursed and forsaken: until my head swam with giddiness and the fumes of nitre and sulphur, while my tongue swelled so as almost to fill my mouth and make swallowing painful. And then, as in a waking dream, I heard the most ravishing sound in the world, that of falling and running water; a few hundred feet below I saw the foam of a little cascade breaking among the boulders at the foot of the cliff; and, beyond that, refreshing patches of verdure—gardens of melons and cucumbers, small fields of wheat, and many palm trees. After the dreary wastes through which I had been travelling, the oasis appeared a veritable paradise; even my mule swished her rope of a tail and whinnied in pure pleasure at the enchanting prospect of green grass and rippling water.

The immediate object of my quest was not to be attained. The prehistoric tombs which I had come to examine were in the vicinity of a large grotto, situated not far above the shingle of the beach and reputed to have been the stronghold of David when the Shepherd King was in hiding from the wrath of Saul. But already they had been thoroughly looted, and little remained save some broken shards of inscribed pottery (ostraca). I retrieved one good-sized fragment upon which appeared lettering in three languages—uncial Greek, Hebrew, and what seemed to be one of the earlier Moabitish dialects, antedating the conquest of Canaan under Joshua. This precious record of a bygone civilization I wrapped carefully in a piece of cloth and stored it away in my saddle-bags, proposing to study it more intensively on my return to my library at Cana.

I had made such an early departure from Bethlehem that it was still some time to noon. And so, after allowing Donna to feed and fill her belly from the clear stream, I resolved to start on the homeward route. However, in place of retracing my steps, I concluded to follow the trail along the seashore, hoping to reach Jericho before nightfall.

Hour after hour I rode along. On my left lay interminable terraces of grey marl, salt and greasy-looking and intersected by dry watercourses; on my right, a succession of gravelly beaches alternating vast stretches of sterile marshland and recalling the words of the prophet Ezekiel: "The miry places thereof, and the marishes thereof shall not be healed; they shall be given to salt." The vertical sun beat down relentlessly, mirages all tremulous in the heat danced before my eyes, and the unending expanse of bitter waters and poisoned soil depressed my spirits. And yet even this apparently dead land has its interlude of resurrection; following the late winter rains there would be a brief fortnight or so when the grass would grow green upon the thin, yellow soil and a tapestry of flowers would hide its ugly scars. The rains, the blessed rains of which Isaiah speaks: "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose." But this miracle was not vouchsafed to my tired eyes, the time of awakening being still distant by several weeks. I pushed forward steadily, a square of cloth bound over my lower face to protect my nostrils and lips from the clouds of sand and gritty dust stirred up by the hot, dry wind.

It was near the tenth hour when I drew rein. At this point the uniform marl terraces and salt-pan of the foreshore were displaced by high cliffs stretching down to the very edge of the poisoned waters. A hundred paces or so on my left I noticed the entrance of a mighty cleft marked by two isolated pillars of reddish sandstone. Recalling the description given me by Judas, I determined that this must be the gorge of Baal-Zebub (the God of Flies), an ancient shrine of the Philistine people and so named in honour of their chief tribal deity. The path through this towering escarpment led to the most inaccessible portion of the wilderness of Jeshimon, an arid region entirely destitute of vegetation, tenanted only by vipers and scorpions and the ubiquitous brown desert rat, with an occasional jackal. Apparently it was to this savage solitude that Jesus of Nazareth had retired after his baptism by John; there to remain in loneliness and silence; denied even the bare necessities of shelter, food, and drink; companioned by wild beasts; his body scorched by

the midday sun and chilled by the midnight breezes. What incredible spirit had driven him into this land without form and void, this desolation where there was no man and even the birds of heaven were fled, a place of doleful creatures—screechowls and dragons and satyrs calling to their fellows on the dark mountains. And my own heart was heavy as I looked and saw no living thing, as I listened and heard no familiar or comforting sound.

Then I reflected. As I have said, it was full forty days since I had parted with Judas on the southbound road; by this time, surely, the period of trial must have come to an end, and the twain be returned to their homes in Nazareth. Still I resolved to satisfy my doubts, and I urged my mule over the stony littoral

to the entrance of the gorge.

Near the right-hand pillar a spring of sweet water welled up from the sands; there was grass here and reed thickets and even a couple of scraggly date palms. Also indubitable evidences of recent occupance—the saddle-bags belonging to Judas and his sheepskin pad. Across a narrow crevice in the rock wall canes had been placed, and upon them palm leaves heavily weighted with stones; here was a rude shelter indeed, but sufficient to ward off the direct rays of the sun. Near by was a pile of camel droppings which Judas must have collected for fuel, and there were even the ashes, still slightly warm, of his last fire. Therefore he could not be very far away and I determined to linger a reasonable time in the hope of his reappearance; possibly, being wearied of waiting for Jesus or concerned for his safety, he had gone up the ravine to seek him. I turned Donna loose on the scanty herbage and sat down under the thatch of palm leaves. Perhaps half an hour passed, and I rose to go; then I heard a cry come pealing down the defile, echoing a dozen times as it was flung from side to side of the rocky chasm.

Such a cry! For the moment it seemed entirely inhuman, suggesting the insane laughter of a hyena. Then I recognized a more terrifying note, the scream of a tortured soul now finally divorced from the flesh that had imprisoned it. A moment before I had been sweating freely; now, as I listened, I found myself

suddenly a-cold.

Far up the gorge I saw a man. He was running as though seeking to escape some imminent peril, his head bent low and his shoulders shrugged. Yet there was nothing in view to give colour to his terror. On and on he came; now he had halted immediately before me.

Yes, it was Judas, but barely recognizable—his face drawn, a

lather of yellowish foam upon his lips, his teeth set, his eyeballs turned upward and inward. He took no notice of my presence although I stood within arm's length. Suddenly, and accompanied by a regularly recurrent twitching of every limb, he began to speak—rapidly, unintelligibly. Again a short silence; then, with a gesture of infinite cunning, he opened his right fist and displayed the object which it had hitherto concealed. I saw it distinctly, a piece of silicious quartz resembling in size, colour, and texture the common barley loaf of the poorer people, such flints as may be found by the tens of thousands scattered upon the surface of the rock desert, and known in the colloquial language of the countryside as "wilderness bread." Once more Judas spoke, and this time with perfect distinctness. "Command this stone that it be made bread," he shouted. For an instant he stood as though awaiting a reply. Then, with a sob of mingled rage and despair, he dashed the flint upon the rocky ground and turned as though to resume his flight. But his strength failed him, and he sank down in a heap upon his guilt of sheepskin. I started to come to his assistance, but there was no necessity; as though by a miracle he was now breathing quietly, the lines of stress were fading from his countenance, and he seemed to sleep as might a tired child. I glanced up the gorge, and caught sight of a majestic form descending the stony way. To my excited imagination he appeared clothed in light as though it were a garment, and I even fancied that I heard the whirring of great, invisible wings. Incontinently I clutched at Donna's trailing bridle and dragged the animal, gently protesting the loss of her supper, along with me in headlong flight. Some fifty paces down the trail I sheltered behind an outlying spur of rock and looked back. The august figure of Jesus of Nazareth stood gazing at the unconscious man. Then he put forth a hand and drew Judas to his feet while one arm went around the Iscariot's shoulders. So I knew that all was well, and I resumed my homeward journey; not for uncounted worlds would I have dared intrude upon that tremendous scene whose mystery I was not to fathom, even in part, for many a day to come.

I passed the night at Jericho in an inn on the city wall, reputed to be the veritable site of Rahab's house, once preserved from the wrath of Joshua's invading host by the line of scarlet thread bound in the window. But my slumbers were broken and uneasy. Two and even three times I started up from my pallet with that body-and-soul-dividing cry re-echoing in my

ears; again and again I sought to reconstruct from the little I had seen and heard the progress of the drama which must have been enacted behind the rocky screen of the gorge of the Fly-god.

Had Jesus then been an-hungered after his sojourn of forty days in this lodge-in-the-wilderness, his body weakened through privation and the alternating stresses of heat and cold? Had he been tempted to expend his spiritual powers for the satisfaction of purely physical needs? Or again, having come off victorious in this initial trial of strength, had there been still other and more subtle enticements to meet and overcome? And who

was the tempter?

It was surely the Iscariot who had emerged from the scene of conflict, a foe beaten and in full retreat. Yet it was not the organ-like voice of the man from Kerioth which had wounded my ears with those sharp cries and anguished dissonances; more surely still it was not the soul of Judas which had looked out at me from those troubled eyes. Was it possible that his body had been temporarily possessed by an alien and hostile intelligence? Perhaps that of the common enemy of mankind? As a Sadducee, I must reject these wild imaginings; there are neither angels nor demons in our cosmogonies. One winter I had attended a few sessions at the Hippocratic school of medicine in Athens, and there had been some discussion upon the popular belief in demoniacal possession—generally contemptuous. But what had I seen and heard? Truly it was an insoluble problem, and I continued to toss from side to side on my uncomfortable The morning came at last, but I was still of doubtful mood.

It was the day after the Sabbath, and I was sitting in my accustomed place for study and reflection—under the branches of a wide-spreading fig tree in my mother's garden at Cana. I had gone there with the full intention of resuming my favourite pursuits of philosophy and literature, and upon the table rested a manuscript borrowed from the library of my Roman friend, Titus Quintus Sulla of Tiberias. The volume contained the Eclogues of the Latin poet Vergil, and I purposed to amuse myself by translating into our Galilæan vernacular several of these serene pictures of rural life. I read aloud the opening line of the First Eclogue: "Tityre, tu patulae recubans sub tegmine fagi . . ."

"O Tityrus, reclining under the shade of thy spreading beech tree . . ." Ah yes, the world forgetting and by the world forgot—what truer wisdom can there be! Let the soul be satisfied in possessing itself, and my fig tree casts as sweet a shade as does

the beech of Tityrus.

Stylus and writing-pad lay ready to my hand, but they were never to be brought into use; at that precise instant my cousin Philip, vaulting in his haste the low garden wall, came to interrupt my labours. He was flushed with an unwonted excitement and spoke rapidly. "We have found him of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write," he called out. "Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."

"What, Philip! Again this Jeshua Bar-Joses!" I resented being recalled from my pleasant excursion along the flowery paths of poesy; this was my chosen and all-sufficing world; why could I not be permitted to dwell there in peace? I looked at Philip discontentedly, the old gibe on my lips: "Can there any

good thing come out of Nazareth?"

"Come and see," countered Philip with a smile; he knew the retort was unanswerable, and I arose in silence to go with him. We made our way to the road leading up from Beth-Abara on the Jordan. "What is the meaning of all this?" I inquired.

"The Master—"

" Is that what you call him now?"

"Yes, and you will understand why when you meet him. To be particular, I may tell you that on the day before the Sabbath the Master came to the 'House of Shipping' where he again met John the Baptist accompanied by two of the latter's disciples—Andrew and John, formerly neighbours of mine at Bethsaida. Immediately they left the Baptist and joined themselves to Jesus; they abode with him that night. Early on the Sabbath Andrew found Simon Peter and brought him to the Master, while John persuaded his brother James to become the fourth member of the company."

"Yes, but how about you, Philip?"

"This morning the Master decided to go into Galilee. I was coming down from Magdala and met the party on the road. Naturally I stopped to speak to my friends; there was a stranger with them."

"This same Jesus?"

"Of course. I was chattering and laughing ——"

"As usual."

"—And he smiled back at me; I liked him. 'Follow me,' he said."

"O Philip, Philip!"

Philip coloured. "At once I dismounted," he continued, "and turned over the horse and my little matter of business to

Simeon who was riding with me. It was as simple as that—and

yet so marvellous!"

Philip swallowed hard and was silent; we walked on. Presently he clutched at my sleeve. "There they are!" he exclaimed, pointing to a little group of men sitting by the wayside. "But the Master is not with them," he went on uncertainly. "Do you wait here, Nathanael, and I will make inquiry."

Philip proceeded to rejoin his friends, while I took my stand

under an oak tree; I felt vexed and impatient.

Down the road from our village came running a young woman, her face pale and her breathing laboured. "Benjamin!"

She wept and beat her breasts.

Directly opposite me a man pushed through a hedge of rose-laurel. By the hand he led a child, a mere baby, barely able to toddle along on his short legs. The boy stumbled and began to whimper; whereupon the man picked him up and advanced to meet the distracted mother; he gave the child into her outstretched arms. The woman bowed low and made as though to kiss his hands, but he drew them away and laid them in blessing on her head. The woman bowed again, almost to the ground, and walked away; the man watched her for a moment with a smile in his eyes rather than on his lips; then he turned and looked at me.

Jesus of Nazareth! I stepped forward, fully intending to meet him as man to man; then, suddenly, I found myself on my knees.

Of the words that passed between us I have no distinct recollection; let them be accepted as set down in the Gospel according to John and already recounted. I only know that when the Master put forth his hand and drew me to my feet, I stood there his disciple, his bond-servant, his man forever and for aye.

The gracious vision of his presence! ah that, at least, rises as clear to my mind's eye as though he were before me in the flesh, the fairest among ten thousand and altogether lovely. Alas! that I have only words, mere words, with which to limn

that picture unforgetable.

A tall man then, or certainly above the average height, whose square-shouldered, closely-knit figure was endowed with an inexpressible dignity of carriage. Also I noticed approvingly the slender hips and well-formed feet. His hands—well, it is one of my personal idiosyncrasies to set uncommon store upon these particular members of the human anatomy; nowadays, in meeting a stranger, it is the first thing I look at. For more than

once in the past have I fallen under the spell of a beautiful face only to have the enchantment broken by the later revelation of some hopelessly ignoble strain in the shape and texture of the hands. Nor is there anything of the ultra-fanciful in this, since the hand—the instrument which governs, which fashions, which creates—is a true sign-manual, an infallible guide to personality; the hand is the man himself. All this was eminently true of Iesus of Nazareth; his hands were beautifully perfect; the fingers long and tapering, with filbert-shaped nails as delicately tinted as the inside of a sea shell, the half-moons plainly visible but not exaggerated in colour or size; moreover, there were none of the usual signs indicative of hard manual labour, no callosities on the palms, no thickening of the finger tips. Yet even our Elder Brother James would have borne witness to the efficiency of Jesus in the handling of plane and draw-knife, of chisel and saw. He was the artist therefore rather than the artisan, and I remember Judas telling me that the ox-bows made by Jesus were renowned throughout Galilee for their beauty of curve and exquisite finish.

He was clothed in an undergarment (kittuna) of blanched linen which came down to his ankles; it was without seam, woven from the top throughout, and secured by a girdle of twisted flax about his waist; the hem was delicately embroidered with self-coloured pomegranate flowers and lilies alternately

spaced, the handiwork doubtless of Mary his mother.

The upper garment (tallith) was made of wool, light canary-yellow in colour and intersected by narrow brown lines.* It was square in shape and provided with the orthodox fringes (zizith), consisting of four long self-threads and one filament of hyacinth colour, knotted together at each of the four corners. His head-gear (macphoreth) was of linen cloth folded in diagonal bands above the forehead, and furnished with a subsidiary flap at the back to protect the neck and shoulders from the direct rays of the sun. He wore no phylacteries either on the forehead or on the arm, these being the distinctive badge of the Pharisaic party with whom the Master was ever at variance.

His features were regular—the face a long oval; the nose narrow and straight but with a slight flare to the nostrils; the eyes large and a deep sapphire blue, undoubtedly those of his mother; the lips naturally coloured and gently upcurved as

^{*}The Church has always had a tradition that Jesus was invariably clothed in pure white. But this is a misconception; it was not until the Transfiguration on the Holy Mount that His raiment became wholly "white and glistering."

though harbouring a hidden smile; the forehead broad and high; the eyebrows thin, delicate, and strongly arched. His hair, parted in the middle, was reddish-brown in hue, but in the full sunlight it glistened as though shot through with minute particles of gold dust; in quantity it was abundant and fell almost to his shoulders. The beard, too, had the distinctive colouring already noted, and it possessed that silky texture which is to be found only where the coarsening touch of the razor has never passed; merging with the hair on the upper lip, it swept downward in a horseshoe curve and forked at the chin, thus leaving the latter comparatively bare. A countenance, at first sight, almost womanish in its beauty, and yet redeemed from the charge of effeminacy by the deep cleft in the chin made visible by the parting of the lower beard. Unmistakably and distinctively a Jewish face, but there was something in it, elusive and constantly changing, which puzzled me; I might go so far as to assert that he did not present quite the same appearance at all times or to each individual observer. A contradiction then and later on I should be able to satisfy its baffling terms, at least in part.

Comely indeed to look upon was this Man of Nazareth, and already I loved him as my Elder Brother. But as yet my eyes were holden, and I could not discern in him the grace (that beautiful word!) of our Lord Jesus Christ. True, as John has recorded, my lips had proclaimed him "Son of God and King of Israel"; but I had spoken unthinkingly, shaken out of my accustomed, coolly critical, philosophic calm by the spell of his radiant personality. And the divinity with which I had impulsively endowed him was a figurative expression, as purely so as that referring to his royal estate; was it not Herod Antipas who sat in actual fact upon the throne of David; did not the Roman eagles still hover above the desecrated shrines of the Holy City? Nevertheless, at the first sight I had loved him; always

I shall be glad to remember that.

The loiterers at the wayside, headed by Philip, rose and joined us. The afternoon shadows were lengthening rapidly, and I offered the hospitality of our home. The Master smiled an assent, and we made our leisurely way to the house to be met by my mother at the threshold. Her welcome was cordial and particularly so to the Master, although she could have had small notion of who and what he was.

After supper we lingered for an hour or more in the large living-room. The Master sat in an obscurely lighted corner, yet, strangely enough, it seemed as though he were occupying the exact centre of the apartment; our eyes were constantly straying to his direction, and when he spoke, even a casual word, everybody stopped to listen. Presently he withdrew, saying that he would stroll for a while in the garden; now, with the simultaneous retirement of my mother from the circle, I had leisure in which to pay some attention to my other guests.

With Philip, my cousin, I have already made you acquainted. Simon Peter and Andrew, James and John were two pairs of brethren. They were all fishermen by trade and residents of Capernaum on the Sea of Galilee. I had never met any of them

before.

I liked Simon Peter, a burly countryman with a sunburned complexion and an immense fan of red beard. The muscles in his bared arms were like boat cables, and I daresay he would be a good man at the inhaul of a heavily laden seine net. Such big hands, too, and covered with hair as thick as the fur of a bear, the fingers habitually curled into the palms as though still clutching at a rope's-end! Also a bull-like voice and a roaring laugh that boomed out at the slightest provocation. His given name was Simon Bar-Jona, more familiarly, Peter; but at their first meeting the Master had decreed that thenceforward he should be called Cephas, which means "The Rock." And indeed the appellation fitted him like a skin; the man was a veritable piece of granite under whose lee we weaklings might take shelter from the mightiest blasts of heaven, perfectly impervious to such minor onslaughts as heat and cold, hunger and thirst. Yet under that hard shell was a heart as soft and warm as that of a child; and a nature, impulsive, blundering, and quick to take offence, but equally ready to forgive and forget. Altogether the most human person I had ever met.

Andrew, his brother, was Peter's almost complete opposite—slight in figure, dark of colouring, quiet and reserved in speech and bearing. But dependable—one could be sure of that—and he possessed the distinction of being the first disciple to be called to the service of the Master, and also the first to enlist a new recruit to the ranks; it was Andrew who had sought out his

brother, Peter, and brought him to Jesus.

James and John, the twin sons of Zebedee, were typically Jewish in appearance, black-polled, black-visaged, black-bearded men with tempers like tinder-boxes; already the Master had playfully dubbed them his "Sons of Thunder." James had a tongue which could bite upon occasion, and he was not averse to seeking preferment for himself. But his mental processes were well co-ordinated, and he possessed the surest and sanest

judgment of us all. He might oppose, from time to time, even the decision of the Master, but the merest touch of Jesus' hand

could quiet his most vehement outbursts.

John's was the warmer nature of the two, and somehow it happened that he was ever the nearest to Jesus' side, ever included in the inmost circle of the Master's fellowship. The distinctive feature of his countenance lay in his eyes, bold and flashing as those of an eagle. By temperament then a mystic who seemed at times to be living in an invisible world; strange to find that rainbowed spirit imprisoned in the rough frame of a Galilæan fisherman!

Must I give a self-portrait to complete the gallery? Well then, I am tall and spare, with the pallor of a scholar and a Sadducean aloofness in my cool, grey eyes; clean-shaven after the Roman mode. A naturally sceptical intelligence and an unemotional nature, not in the least likely to be moved by the clamour of the vulgar or the easy tears of the sentimentally inclined. "A modernist of the modernists," summed up my cousin Philip, "whose only religion is science, whose one passion is the pursuit of truth. Yet honest enough in his dour way," he adds a little grudgingly. I am sufficiently humble to be glad if this last qualification be true; perhaps it was what the Master himself meant when he said of me at our first meeting: "An Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile."

Finally we are all young men of an age approximate to that of our chosen leader, that is, just turned of thirty. I hear that there are others to join us later, but our company is not to be recruited after the ordinary proselyting fashion; no one becomes a member except upon the express invitation of Jesus, an invita-

tion that may be long delayed.

I had arranged to give the Master the use of my own bedroom, but when I went into the garden to call him he was not to be found. I remembered what Judas had told me of his frequent retirement for prayer and meditation, and so made no further effort to seek him. He must have spent the entire night in the open, for I had slept on a mat near the door and should have known if he had entered the house; assuredly no one saw him until we were all gathered for the morning meal. Then suddenly he appeared and took the place at the head of the table which had been reserved for him. He looked refreshed and cheerful after his vigil, and partook with appetite of the broiled lake-fish, honeycomb, and milk which formed the staple of the repast. How the room seemed to lighten as he entered, how

naturally every eye centred itself upon him! Even as flowers

turning to greet the morning sun.

This evening there was to be a marriage in our village, the bride, Salome, being a friend of the family of Jesus. A little after noon Mary herself came to the house, having learned that Jesus was our guest. My mother met her at the door and brought her into the garden where we were sitting; there were quiet greetings and an affectionate embrace between Mary and her son. "You are coming to the wedding?" she asked.

The Master hesitated, and the four disciples looked em-

barrassed. What, in their working clothes!

"It is only a family gathering," urged Mary, "and Salome will be so disappointed if you are not present. Bring your

friends; they will all be welcome."

Although the ceremony was not to take place until after sunset, the preliminary festivities were already under way; there was the sound of music in the distance—the light strains of harps and lutes accompanied by the beating of drums and the clashing of cymbals—and the streets were filling with idlers and sightseers. Presently our house party joined the expectant throng of merrymakers and I, pleading special and pressing business as sufficient reason for my non-attendance, was left alone. There was truth, too, in my excuses, for I had been apprised that the Master purposed to start on an extended journey this same evening; it was necessary that I should make some permanent disposition of my precious books and manuscripts, including the return of those borrowed from my Roman friend in Tiberias. Also there were many loose ends to be gathered up preparatory to what might be a long absence. My mother regarded me reproachfully, but she made no open objection; already I had told her of what I had in mind, and she had yielded to my strongly expressed intention to become one of the company of Jesus.

And there was another consideration at the back of my mind. My uncle Joseph and his daughter would be among the wedding guests, and I thought it better that I should not again see Lilli. In these last few weeks our mutual relations had remained unchanged, except that Lilli had shown a marked shyness in my presence; somehow she contrived that we should never be quite alone together. Possibly my uncle had said something to her of his hopes for our betrothal, and her maidenly modesty might well have taken alarm. How events might have shaped themselves were it not for the sudden injection of a new and compelling interest in my life, I did not know; or, more truly,

I preferred not to examine too closely. Better not run the chance of disturbing the delicate pivot upon which the needle of necessity now swings; enough that the Master has called me to his side and I cannot say him nay. And so I went on with my preparations for departure, striving to forget everything but the immediate duties before me.

The glare of the hymeneal torches had long since faded from the evening sky when the wedding party finally returned. To my surprise, Judas Iscariot was among them. He had just come back from Kerioth and had chanced to meet the Master in the street; naturally he had been invited to join the wedding guests. Almost immediately upon arriving at our house Jesus and Mary had gone to the upper room where they could talk in privacy, whilst my mother was busy with her household duties; consequently I was left to play the host to our other guests. They were discussing earnestly, even excitedly, an extraordinary incident which had occurred at the marriage feast, and Philip proceeded to acquaint me with the particulars.

"At the very height of the festivities," he began, "the wine gave out; not a drop was left. Whereupon Mary appealed to the Master. 'They have no wine,' she told him. He answered

her with something that I did not catch——"

"He said," interrupted Judas, "'Woman, what have I to do

with thee?' And added, 'Mine hour is not yet come.'"
"Yes, that was it," confirmed John. ". . . A strange reply! But Mary must have understood it, for she told the servants to obey Jesus in whatsoever he commanded. In the courtyard stood six large cisterns of stone, after our Jewish custom of purification. 'Fill the water-pots with water,' said Jesus. The servants filled them to the very brim. 'Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast,' continued the Master. And again they obeyed him."

"They took this water to the ruler of the feast!" I exclaimed.

"Ah, but it was no longer water," explained Philip. "It was wine."

"Impossible!"

"That is just what you would say," contended Judas. "Nevertheless, it was wine, and of the very finest quality. The governor asked the bridegroom how it came that he had kept so glorious a vintage until the very end. It must have been a miracle then, such as only Jesus could perform; you remember what I told you." He cast a triumphant glance at me, but I was not to be downed so easily.

"This is all against nature," I retorted. "Such a thing cannot be."

"And yet it happened, O doubting Nathanael." And again

Judas smiled—craftily, exultingly.

"There must be some reasonable explanation," I insisted. "Is there no one among you who can answer? You saw, you tasted this water made wine. Are you relying upon the evidence of your senses? But you cannot trust them, as I could prove by a score of similar happenings. You do not, you cannot know."

"There were some who did know," said John quietly.

"There were some who did know," said John quietly. "Those who obeyed him—immediately and without question.

'The servants which drew the water knew.'"

I stared at John, but he met my half-angry look with a serene confidence; again it seemed to me that his wonderful eyes were gazing far beyond me, piercing into the very heart of the infinite and the unknowable.

The subject was allowed to drop, but I continued to puzzle and fret over this inexplicable occurrence. Yet I did understand, at least in part, what John meant. A secret hid from the wise and prudent, and yet revealed unto babes—those humble servants and holy men of heart; they knew. And only they. Suppose I had been there, at this marriage feast of Cana, I with my pride of intellect opposing the dull credulity of Philip and the prodigy-seeking instincts of Judas; well, would I have been willing to comply with this command of Jesus, so patently absurd and unreasonable? In all honesty I must say no; and so, according to John, I should have missed the perfect understanding. Ah, but can it be possible that John, this unlearned Galilæan peasant, may be nearer right than I, Nathanael Bar-Talmai, instructed in the philosophy of Alexandria and Athens, trained in the science of Archimedes and Lucretius? Yes, the problem must remain unsolved, but my resolution to enter the service of Jesus of Nazareth had not been altered by a hair's breadth. The vulgar-minded might seek after a sign, but I would follow the Master in default of prodigies and miracles. Or even despite them. And thus the matter rested.

The departure from Cana was made in the late evening, just after the rising of the moon. Zilla, my mother, and Mary came to the threshold to bid us good-bye. Neither spoke a word of expostulation or reproach, but there was a tenseness in their attitude—the clenched hands and compressed lips—which told of an inward conflict; they were facing that break in every mother's life when she watches her son leaving the parental rooftree

to embark upon the sea of strife which is a man's portion in the world. The Master kissed Mary's forehead and turned away; and, after a brief lingering in my mother's embrace, I followed him to the end of the garden where our companions were await-

ing us.

As we fared down the deserted village street we passed my uncle Joseph's house. From an upper chamber shone a single light. There was an almost imperceptible stirring of the window draperies, and I even fancied that I caught the flash of a white hand waving a final farewell—Lilli. Momentarily I felt my heart grow heavy as the full consequence of my decision presented itself. For I was leaving behind me, perhaps forever, all I had hitherto held most dear—my home, my mother, my beloved books, the ease and luxury of my sheltered lot in life, the promise of a great career under the shrewd guidance and powerful backing of my uncle; finally—may I dare think so—the red rose of a woman's love, all the sweeter for its late flowering. There was a fulness in my throat and my eyes dimmed. I stumbled on the uneven footing, but a steadying hand put forth and caught me—the hand of the Master.

Now we had turned the last corner, and Cana of Galilee lay irrevocably in the past. Yet, suddenly, I knew that it was the pathway of peace which stretched before me; a majestic figure kept ever close at my side—it was Jesus of Nazareth with whom

I walked.

THE CALLING OF JAMES THE LESS

E had taken our departure by the northeastern road, the route to the lake. Capernaum was distant about sixteen miles, and our intention had been to walk straight through. But John had his foot pierced by a thorn and soon he was limping badly. Whereupon Philip proposed that we should seek temporary lodging with a small farmer of his acquaintance. "He is called James Cleopas," he added. "But he has a cousin of the same name, a prosperous landowner. And so, by way of distinction, our man is generally known as James Minor, meaning the Less."

"Never heard of him," grunted Judas.

"Why should you?" smiled Philip. "A person of no importance, I grant you. But he will give us a night's shelter, and

there is none other within a league."

We walked on and presently Philip announced that this was where James Minor lived. The house was dark, but after repeated knockings its owner appeared and made us welcome. It was now long past midnight and we retired at once to our couches, mere pads of sheepskin laid upon the hard mud floor of the hut.

At breakfast the next morning our host waited in person at the table, striving to make up for the simplicity of the fare by the hospitable warmth with which it was offered. James Minor appeared to be a man well above fifty years of age, small in stature and walking with a perceptible limp. Several months ago he had met with an accident while chopping wood, the axe severing some of the upper tendons of his right foot. The wound had healed, but its effects remained and he would always be lame.

His face, with its small pinched features and scanty beard, was redeemed from insignificance only by the beautiful and trustful brown eyes and the kindly curves of the mouth. A good man, doubtless, but not overly intelligent, and his bent shoulders proclaimed that life's burden had lain heavily upon them; the struggle for hand-to-mouth existence had graven significant lines in his face, and there was an appearance of extreme shyness and

timidity in his general demeanour; a man whose absence is never missed, whose presence is never regarded. In a word, one of life's failures, the rind of a sucked orange about to be thrown on the rubbish heap; what use has the world for such as he? Somewhat to my surprise, the Master had beckoned James aside upon the conclusion of the meal; now they were sitting together under the solitary sycamore tree which shaded the rude dwelling, a growth as scraggly and ill-nourished as the unfortunate James himself.

"It has been going from bad to worse with him," remarked Philip as we strolled out of earshot. "I mean since the death of his wife last autumn; she had managed to keep bread in their mouths through the sale of goat's-milk and the eggs from a small flock of chickens. And there was also the honey," indicating a row of three or four hives, evidently of home manufacture and none too skilful at that. "But after Miriam's passing, one mischance followed another. The hawks picked off the best pullets, and the wolves made way with the young goats, leaving only two or three old females long since gone dry. Finally the bees swarmed and James lacked the heart to follow them up. I happened to be passing at the time, and there he was sitting by the deserted hives with an old brazen pan in his lap; his tears were dropping into it. I dismounted and offered to help. I picked up the iron spoon which had fallen from his hand, and began to beat a tattoo. But he could not even tell me in what direction the bees had flown; no use."

"How about the land?"

"You see what it is," returned Philip with a scornful appraisal of the stony, infertile soil whose sole vegetation consisted of scattered tufts of coarse grass. "Only a goat could live on such pastures. There used to be a field of clover over there which kept the bees contented, but last summer's drouth burned it out and the winter frosts did the rest. Oh, it's all quite hopeless."

"Has James Minor no family?"

"There was Reuel, an industrious, steady-going youth. But not much of a head-piece on him; his father over again. Then he fell sick and the priests decided formally that he was under the curse."

"Leprosy?"

Philip nodded. "Yes, and an incurable case. No one knows where he is nowadays, and what can it matter? But there was worse to come. Mary——"

"A daughter?"

"Yes, and the only one. The most beautiful woman I ever beheld, if you can believe that after meeting her father. A good girl, too, and devoted to her mother; also a master-hand with the bees. But after Miriam died from the terrible sore which kept eating into her breast and driving her mad with pain—many a time I have heard her shrieking at two furlongs and more away so you had to shut your ears——" Philip shuddered. "Well, when it was over at last, the girl changed completely—morose, bitter, intractable. Finally Mary told her father that she could no longer endure this miserable straitened life; she said it made her feel like a hawk in a cage. She went away to that Roman sink-hole, Sepphoris. You can guess the rest."

"What became of her?"

"I saw her only the other day in Magdala, painted up to the eyes with kohl and henna, clad in the richest of brocades and silks, glittering with jewels and golden ornaments. She is the reigning toast of the gilded youth in all the garrison towns around the lake. Yet even her lovers are afraid of her; they call her the woman possessed of seven devils."

James Minor had arisen, and now he was limping towards us. I looked at the man crushed by so many misfortunes, and was amazed at the expression of happiness depicted on his face; actually he was smiling, albeit somewhat deprecatingly as though he were a dog anxious to please and yet half-fearful of an answering

curse or blow.

"The Master has invited me to become one of his company," he said with a scrape of his crippled foot. "I hope you will not

mind very much."

"Isn't that just what one might expect from Jesus?" exclaimed Philip in an aside to me. Then his natural kindliness of heart reasserted itself and he continued aloud: "The Master has spoken and that settles it; you will share in what we have to offer. It won't be much, but perhaps compared to this——"He glanced at the bare fields and desolate house.

"To be—with him," stammered James the Less. "And Philip, it was you who brought him here. How—how can I

ever thank you!"

The other disciples said no word, but James Major gave an half-articulate grunt of dissatisfaction; the Master's action in encumbering himself with a companion so useless, nay, rather burdensome, did not commend itself to his worldly-wise judgment. It was Simon Peter, as usual, who cleared the air of thunder.

"Since Jesus wishes it," he boomed out, "that is enough for

me. And so, friend James the Less, you are welcome, twice and thrice welcome. Moreover, now that the season of spring fishing is here, I may be able to give you a job in the cleaning vats. What sort of a hand are you with the gutting knife?"

James Minor blushed and hesitated.

"Not that it matters a fingerling herring," continued Peter. "At my house there is always a-plenty in the stew-pot, and ever an extra loaf in the bread-box. You are one of us now, so get

your bundle; it is time to be on our way."

James Minor managed to screw up his countenance into the semblance of a smile, although his eyes were still blinking and his underlip quivering from the impact of Peter's great hairy hand upon his shoulder. He went to the house to collect his few personal belongings—so very few!—and when he reappeared there was nothing more to do than to close the rickety door and untether the three aged goats. The journey was resumed.

Two hours later and we were within sight of the large body of fresh water known in our forefathers' time as the Sea of Chinneroth. By the Galilæans it was called indifferently the Sea of Galilee or the Lake of Gennesaret, while the Romans had renamed it the Sea of Tiberias in honour of the Emperor. shape it resembled an irregular pear, and it was thirteen miles in length by some six in breadth at its widest portion, near the northern end. Lying in a deep depression of the earth's crust, its waters were unusually high in temperature, and the climate being semi-tropical the surrounding land, at least on the western side, was of extraordinary fertility. From our vantage-point on the high table-land of Galilee, the lake presented a charming picture—a turquoise jewel set in a filigree-gold frame of orange and lemon trees with interlying patches of yellow mustard. Far to the north gleamed the snow-white turban of Mount Hermon, while to the east lay the serrated, many-coloured ranges of the lava hills of Gadara and Gamala; everywhere were orchards and terraced vineyards, delighting the eye by an incomparable vision of verdure prankt out by glowing beds of tulips, anemones, bluebells, and white and lilac cyclamen; everywhere again were groves of palm and oak and walnut that afforded cooling shade from the midday sun; truly a paradiso, as the Persians say. Alas! that I should have lived to see so much of this loveliness destroyed, but after the sack of the Holy City, by Titus in the year of our Lord 70, the trees were cut down over a wide area and desolation replaced beauty.

But to-day, in this year of grace 27, the prospect was a ravishing one. The shore-line is indented by numerous small bays, and Capernaum, our objective, was situated on one of the loveliest of these natural harbours. The village lay some two miles to the south of where the river Jordan enters the lake, and near its site was a celebrated warm spring from which issued a considerable stream, crystal clear and swarming with fish. Indeed, fishing formed the leading industry of the entire region. Along the western shore one could see the seine nets drying on the shingle; while the fishermen, either afloat and engaged in the active exercise of their craft or busy ashore in the cleaning and salting of their catch for the foreign market, were everywhere in evidence. At all times the surface of the lake offered an animated spectacle; here a Roman trireme sped along with a smother of spray at her cutwater, the galley slaves chained to their benches and pulling at the immensely long oars under stimulus from the rawhide whips in the hands of the sub-officers who patrolled the central, longitudinal gangway with a vigilant eye for shirkers; there a gaily painted pleasure boat put forth from the white marble quay of Tiberias, its silken sails presenting a dazzling contrast to the dingy, reddish-brown canvas of the fishing boats, its deck crowded with aristocratic, languid idlers from the Herodian court; a slave girl dancing on the poop to the slow-pulsating strains of Corinthian harps and Lydian lutes; everywhere movement and colour and all the pomp and circumstance of a richly abundant life. I am no friend to the Empire, but I cannot deny how wonderfully the delicate flower of Grecian culture may flourish on our alien soil when fertilized and fortified by the warm blood drawn from the veins of Roma Victrix.

We descended the steep path from the highlands, suddenly to find ourselves traversing the narrow streets of Capernaum, finally reaching the level space on the sea-front where stood the principal public buildings—the Roman custom-house and garrison post, the stone-roofed market-place, and the synagogue, the latter a structure of white limestone on a foundation of black basalt. The Master called my attention to the singular circumstance that the lintel of the principal doorway bore the carved device of a pot of manna instead of the more familiar seven-branched candlestick or Paschal lamb. I nodded assent, albeit somewhat puzzled as to his meaning—an emblem more or less; what could it matter?

As usual, there was a crowd of people in this public square—traffickers in the market-place, old men sitting in the sun, veiled women walking with their children, scribes and elders, helmeted

legionaries from the Roman garrison, and a varied assortment of pure idlers. Suddenly the Master faced the throng and silence fell, a strange and solemn silence as though the listeners awaited a message of the highest import, receptive indeed, but not a little bemused in mind. Who was this stranger? Certainly not a scribe, and yet he carried with him a definite impression of authority. For a brief moment Jesus looked upon that motley multitude so inexplicably halted upon the beaten path, the trivial round, of their accustomed lives; then he pointed to the sculptured representation of the pot of manna over the threshold of Capernaum's synagogue. He spoke:

"Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat. * * * Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth

life unto the world."

A tall, poorly dressed woman stood in the forefront of the crowd; her thrown back veil revealed a countenance noble and commanding in its features, but worn by disease and ravaged by some consuming sorrow. I recognized her as Joanna, at one time the wife of Chuzas, the superintendent of the estates and household affairs of King Herod Antipas. It was commonly known that her conjugal relations were most unhappy, Chuzas being a notorious loose-liver and a coarse-minded, bad-tempered man; for some ten years Joanna had lived entirely apart from her husband although there had been no formal divorce; quite evidently she was now in straitened circumstances.

"Lord, evermore give us this bread," she said, her voice low

and broken.

Jesus looked at her compassionately. "I," he said, "am the

bread of life; he that cometh to me shall never hunger."

There was a movement of dissent in the throng: "Who

There was a movement of dissent in the throng: "What manner of words are these? who is this man who dares to utter them?"

The Master continued calmly and steadily: "I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. * * * And this is the will of him that sent me, that everyone who seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life."

Again there was a shifting of feet and half-articulate murmurings among the auditors. A huge bulk of a man, whose broad phylacteries proclaimed him one of the sect of the Pharisees, pushed forward, his face red with anger. "Is not this Jesus,"

he shouted, "the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? how is it then that he saith, I came down from heaven?"

James and John, true to their inherited and fiery temperaments, sought to interfere. James seized the man by the shoulder and covered the protesting mouth with his rough hand, while John burst forth in a torrent of invective. "And I know you, Hananiah Ben-Hamel," he derided, "you the despolier of widows' houses and the robber of the portion of orphans! I spit upon your beard: may dogs defile ---'

John stopped short, silenced by a look from the Master.

"Murmur not among yourselves," said Jesus, again addressing the crowd in general. "I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will

give for the life of the world."

On the threshold of the near-by Roman custom-house appeared a man of middle age, tall and well-knit of frame. He had a thin, saturnine countenance, and in his dark eyes shone a peculiar light—the answering scorn of a strong spirit for his scorners. An inkhorn was suspended from his girdle, and he held a bundle of official-looking documents in his left hand. Apparently he had come out from his inner office, attracted by the sound of the Master's voice and the increasing clamour among the listeners.

"Matthew-Levi, the publican," remarked Philip in an undertone. "Decent enough for all that he is a renegade to his people; a better man than his filthy business calls for."

"I am that bread of life," reiterated the Master. His gaze, travelling over the heads of the assemblage, caught and held the

eye of the despised tax-gatherer.

Again that protesting stir among the audience, and a powerful voice rang out: "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" All heads were turned in the direction of the speaker, but his identity remained undiscovered.

"Our brother in Israel has spoken truly," interjected the still angry Hananiah. "These are the words of foolishness; I will not listen to them." A medley of confused protests arose.

Jesus raised his hand—that beautiful hand!—and instantly

the tumult died away. Once more the Master spoke:

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. * * * For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. * * * As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me. This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live forever. * * * I am that bread of life."

A stone propelled by a strong arm whizzed through the air; it struck squarely upon the carven pot of manna immediately above the Master's head, and defaced it beyond recognition. But Jesus stood there untouched and unharmed. The crowd, headed by Hananiah, surged forward with a roar.

"Keep together," counselled Peter. "You, John and James, at the Master's right; Andrew and Philip on the left; with Nathanael and the others to bring up the rear. Forward then!"

In a compact body we made our way down the lane of gesticulating, scowling men. Hananiah bent and picked up a heavy stick. But suddenly his face became suffused with blood, he staggered and crumpled into a heap, his arms and legs twitching. A gigantic Galilæan sprang over Hananiah's prostrate body and sought to bar our further progress, but the sight of the thornwood club in Peter's fist caused him to change his mind and he stepped back; now we were clear of the mob and followed only by their execrations. As we passed the custom-house Matthew-Levi made a half-movement with the evident intention of joining us, his great eyes glowing and his lips parted. But Jesus shook his head, albeit with a smile of the utmost friendliness; and the publican, after casting one long and longing look upon the Master, retreated into the seclusion of his official abode.

Having arrived at Peter's house on the beach front, we stopped to take account of our forces. "Where is Judas?" asked Andrew. No one could say, but I remembered now that I had not seen him since our first entrance into Capernaum. "I daresay that he is off on still another of his mysterious errands in Gamala," hazarded John. "And perhaps it is just as well," he added significantly. Now I had noted that there was no love lost between Judas and John; it was seldom that they were in agreement on even the smallest of issues. I took it upon myself to defend the missing disciple. "It's not like Judas to run away from possible trouble," I pointed out. "I'm not so sure of that," retorted John, and the matter dropped.

I glanced around the circle; certainly there were other gaps in it. James Minor!—but no, for here he comes, his face white with exertion and his breath coming and going in little gasps; as badly frightened a man as ever I saw. Small wonder, too, seeing that his lameness had prevented him from keeping up with our comparatively rapid progress; the wolves must have been literally snapping at his heels. Yet he managed an hysterical

laugh as he joined us. "Someone gave me the crack of a cudgel on the head," he explained. The Master drew him aside and laid his hand on the bruise, whereupon James straightened up and smiled as might a child under the healing touch of his mother's fingers.

"There were the three who joined us at the marriage feast of Cana," went on Andrew. "Obed and Lemuel and Polycrates:

I don't see them."

It was quite true. Evidently they had taken alarm at the first sign of trouble and had melted discreetly into the crowd; the Master's saying had been too hard for them. Or, as John has recorded the incident in his Gospel, "From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him."

It was hard upon noon, and Peter invited us all to partake of the midday meal at his house. The Master had sat in unwonted silence while we were at meat; then, just before he pronounced the concluding blessing, he seemed to arouse himself from his abstraction. "No man," he said, "having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." Peter's face crimsoned and he blurted out: "Lo, we have left all, and have followed thee." The answering, challenging gaze of Jesus held every eye. "There is no man," he said, "that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, but he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life."

The Master rose and left the house; we watched him disap-

pear into a neighbouring grove of mulberry trees.

"An hundredfold!" ejaculated Peter. "Houses and children and lands! I like that; eh, brother James, surnamed the Less?"

James Minor looked down at the floor. "But I had nothing to leave," he said confusedly. "This can't be meant for me."

"No more for me," lamented Philip. "My patrimony, as you all know, is gone to the last shekel. And a week ago I had to give up my favourite riding horse, Selim, to discharge a debt—saddle and silver stirrups as well. But what does it matter," he continued with a change of tone. "We are young, the world is before us, and we follow the Master; it is the great adventure." He laughed confidently.

"I say an hundredfold," persisted Peter. "Houses and lands! Enough and to spare for everybody. And at this very time," he

concluded in a tone of simple satisfaction.

"With persecutions," I put in slyly. "Have you forgotten how the Master hesitated as he spoke those qualifying words?

Yet he did say them. Quite plainly and unmistakably."

Peter looked perturbed. "Perhaps so," he admitted. "But he couldn't have meant what you think. I stand by the hundredfold of good things so soon to come, and in the meantime I have my nets to overhaul. Will you come with me, Andrew? Also the rest of you, if you like."

John and I were left alone. "With persecutions," I repeated,

a little maliciously as I am ashamed to remember.

But John did not even hear me. "And in the world to come eternal life," he said under his breath, his eyes fixed on the dis-

tant sky-line.

I walked away, vexed and dispirited. Of all the company of Jesus, I was the only one who had made any real sacrifice of earthly possessions. John and James, Andrew and Peter earned a bare living from their fishing business; Philip was a spendthrift, James Minor a pauper, Judas a hand-to-mouth adventurer; none of them had anything of value to lose. Not that I regretted in the least my action. Houses and lands; what were they but other names for tedium and disillusionment? How could I desire them restored in hundredfold measure? And as for the future reward to which John was looking forward, what if there be no future world in which to spend that eternal life? Could Jesus be merely mocking us?

The current of my thought swung into a new channel; what was this kingdom of God of which he had spoken? Amid the mulberry trees I saw the flutter of the Master's robe; I went and joined him. "Rabbi," I began hesitatingly. Jesus stopped to

listen.

"This kingdom of God," I went on. "I understand that having put my hand to the plough I am not to look back. But

how is one to be made fit for this high estate?"

Jesus laid his hand on my shoulder; his eyes were searching my inmost soul. "Whosoever," he said, "shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein." He turned and walked away.

"As a little child!" Another hard saying. And, perhaps,

the hardest of all.

It is evening. James Minor and I are lodged at the house of Zebedee, the father of James and John. Philip is the guest of Andrew, and the Master remains with Simon Peter. Shortly after sunset James and I walked down to the sea. I had in-

tended to go alone, but the old man looked so wistful as I prepared to depart that I invited him to accompany me. Through the purple twilight we idled along, each busy with his own reflections upon the events of this memorable day. It was James Minor who finally broke the silence. "This kingdom of God of which he spoke; do you understand what he meant by it?"

"How should I?" was my somewhat impatient answer. "The reign of righteousness perhaps, that blessed state of which Isaiah prophesies when 'Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain. * * When the wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid. * * * And a little child shall lead them. * * * When the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice's den; when they shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the seas.' A beautiful dream, my James, but only a dream."

"Ah, but I asked him about that," said James Minor, "when we happened to be apart from the others for a moment. It was a strange answer that he gave me. 'Behold,' he said, 'the

kingdom of God is within you."

"Amazing indeed!" was my inaudible comment. "For if James Minor has correctly reported the words of Jesus, and if the Master were not using the dialectic of the Greek metaphysicians—most unlikely—the answer must mean that this kingdom of God is not an abstraction, a mere figure of speech, but a reality, present here and now. Nor is it something apart from man, as inaccessible as that Promised Land beheld by Moses from the summit of Mount Nebo but never to be entered in or possessed by him; no, this kingdom belongs to every son of Adam; it is as much a part of his inmost nature as are the organs of his physical being, a treasure which every man owns as a birthright, that merely waits for recognition and appropriation. Can such a thing be possible?" I turned to James Minor. "This is again a hard saying," I added aloud.

"Yes, but it did not seem so hard when I heard it from the

Master's own lips," said James simply.

I looked at that tired old face now transfigured by an incommunicable light of certainty and peace; and suddenly I was seized by a pang of envy; this poor creature, a mere piece of wreckage from life's stormy sea, possessed an assurance of well-being for which I would have bartered my very life. But my

pride of intellect refused to bend, and I remained silent. How vividly was this scene to be recalled to me when some months later I listened to the Sermon on the Mount, and heard the Master give utterance to the first Beatitude: "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." But for the time being my eyes were darkened and my heart remained hardened. "Let us walk on," I said shortly.

Before us, on the foreshore, sat a woman engaged in the mending of a seine net. It was hard work and the light was fading rapidly; nevertheless, her fingers, lacerated by the rough strands of tarred rope, moved quickly and surely. I saw that she was a young woman and not uncomely. Convulsively James Minor clutched at my sleeve. "It must be, it is Ruth!" he whispered.

"Ruth?"

"The maiden who was once betrothed to my unhappy son Reuel. Perhaps she knows where he is; I will ask her." He would have started forward, but I restrained him. "To what purpose?" I objected. "He is a leper; it is not lawful."

James Minor let his breath escape him in a sob, and the woman looked up. She must have recognized the old man, for she sprang like a hare startled from her form and glided away into the shadows. At the spot where she had been sitting lay a package wrapped in a piece of coarse cloth. I picked it up and examined its contents—a few wheaten cakes, a handful of raisins, and a lump of goat's-cheese. "It must be her supper," I commented, as I refolded the covering and returned the bundle to its place on the shingle. "If we go away, perhaps she will return to fetch it. Come."

We walked on a few paces, and then James stopped. "I am weary," he said. "I think I will go back to the house." I made no attempt to detain him, and presently he hobbled away. A flash of intuition seized me. "James Minor was right," I said half-aloud. "This girl, Ruth, does know where Reuel is keeping himself. She cannot bear to see her man begging his bread at the city gate in company with the other lepers, the object of churlish charity. And so she works over hours at this miserably paid business of net mending in order to earn the food to keep life in her lover's rotting body. Doubtless he is hiding in one of the numerous caves along the coast, and she does not dare to bring him the provision except under cover of darkness." An unwonted wave of pity flooded me, and the words from the Song of Songs rose unbidden to my lips: "Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it: if a man would

give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned." Lovely imagery of course; but hitherto I had thought of the words only in their literary sense—The Preacher turned poet. Was this humble woman to teach me that truth may lie behind beauty; invariably so, if it be the perfect beauty? And I felt sorry and ashamed that I had forced my way, even though unwittingly, to the very steps of this altar of secret sacrifice.

Long hours I sat by the darkling waters, revolving many things in my mind, striving to set them in a reasonable order. The kingdom of God and its realization; well, that must wait upon clearer knowledge; perhaps to be with Jesus was to learn of him. But ever and anon returns that query of the unknown mocker at the Capernaum synagogue: "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" A searching question indeed, and even the Master has not definitely answered it. Nor can I; there it lies at the bottom of my soul: "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" Were it not more reasonable to cling to the philosophy of Ptolemy the pagan poet, as when he says:

"I know that I am mortal and the creature of a day; yet when I search the close-set, whirling circle of the stars, no longer do I stand with feet upon the earth; but, seated with Jove him-

self, I take my fill of the bread of Heaven."

Noble words these, but do they altogether satisfy the eternal

longing? I do not know, I cannot tell. But Jesus says:

"I am the bread of life; he that cometh to me shall never hunger."

And the truth lies—where?

Two days later we were surprised by the arrival at Capernaum of Mary, the mother of Jesus, together with Ednah, the widowed daughter, and her three children; also Elder Brother James. The carpentry business at Nazareth had been slow of late, but there was unusual activity in the boat-building yards of Capernaum, several large craft being on the ways. James indeed had been offered steady work by Simon Peter, and it had seemed wise to accept the opportunity. Mary had rented a dwelling on the water-front and the family would be moving in immediately; the Master, of course, would make one of his mother's household. Philip would be away for several weeks on a visit to his relatives in Bethsaida; and I, unwilling to tax further the hospitality of Zebedee's house, had decided to take lodgings at the village inn; also, I had invited James Minor to be my guest. My purse was

still well lined with silver shekels and with the gold coin from the Roman mint generally known as the *aureus*; moreover, my mother stood ready at any time to replenish my exchequer. Yet I was unwilling to play the idler, and the new boat which Peter was building would require the services of several artisans for some time to come. Jesus had already been enrolled as a workman, and I was glad to continue in his always inspiring company. James Minor, too, would be at the shipyard; and although he possessed but small manual skill, he could make himself useful by blowing the bellows of the forge and in sharpening tools. And so it was arranged.

The ship-building yard presented an animated spectacle. Peter was ambitious to possess the largest and finest fishing-boat on the lake, and the work must be pushed forward rapidly if the new craft were to be placed in service before the height of the spring season. Jesus was the artist among us, and one day I found him gazing with delight at the gorgeous figure-head at the prow of a Roman galley, a wonderfully carved dolphin decorated in the resplendent colours of the rainbow. But, as a pious Hebrew, he could not contravene the direct prohibition in the second commandment of the Law against the making of graven images or the likeness of anything that is in the heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the waters under the earth, the sole exception being the symbolic representation of animals in the sacred furniture of the Temple. And so he had to content himself with the fabrication of the more delicate fittings of the boat, and in bestowing upon them the exquisite finish which only his beauty-loving hands could achieve. Busy days then, followed by long evenings of intimate fellowship and never-to-be-forgotten converse with the Master. Jesus would enter one of Peter's boats, and we would row him to a little promontory jutting into the lake, which was a favourite meeting-place of the people of Capernaum, gathered after their day's work to enjoy the warm, flower-scented breezes blowing over the water. From the anchored boat the Master would talk to the assembly—homely, friendly discourses on the material problems of their daily lives; or illuminating pictures of the beauty and wonder of the natural creation, the mystery of the whirling planets, and the poetry of a rain-drop at the heart of an opening rose; or intimate revelations of the Everlasting Father, He who covereth Himself with light as with a garment: who maketh the clouds His chariot: who walketh upon the wings of the wind: whose voice is as the sound of many waters; and

yet who humbleth Himself to paint the wayside lily and light the evening star. But ever the Master's chosen subject was the kingdom of God and of heaven, and here he taught his hearers by means of parables which even the youngest of his auditors could understand, the simple stories which Matthew, in particular, has set down in his Gospel—the sower who went forth to sow, the wheat among the tares, the grain of mustard seed, the leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, the treasure hid in a field, the pearl of great price, and the draw-net which was cast into the sea and which gathered of every kind, both good and bad. It is not surprising that Matthew-Levi should have been the writer to preserve for our use these precious records, for I noticed that he never missed any of these evening gatherings. Always he sat apart from his fellow-townsmen, knowing that he was not in favour among them; but he continued to keep his eyes fixed on the countenance of the Master, leaning forward in his eagerness so as not to lose a single word from the lips of Tesus.

Now it was the month Nisan, and the Passover was at hand. The Master, of course, would go up to Jerusalem to attend the great feast, and I was ready to accompany him. John also, since Zebedee and James could look after the business. But Peter had the rigging of the new boat to set up, and Andrew would be busy in attending to the daily catch of fish; it seemed impossible that either of the brothers should be away at this crowded season. Philip would probably meet us at Jerusalem, travelling by the Peræan route. James Minor also made one of the party.

It was the evening before the departure, and for the last time the Master taught the people from the boat anchored a cable's length from the beach. He had just finished the story of the lost sheep when a pleasure craft from Tiberias drew up alongside, its gilded oars flashing in the descending sun, its pennons of crimson and purple drooping in the almost windless air. A gorgeous couch of sandalwood, inlaid with ivory and covered with a Damascus tapestry fringed with silver lace, stood upon the high poop; and on it reclined a young woman dressed in scarlet-hued silk; her hair, evelashes, and finger nails stained dark-red with henna; a profusion of jewelled rings, bracelets, combs, and crisping-pins enhancing but not eclipsing her bewildering beauty of face and form. At once I realized that this could be none other than that Mary of Magdala, of whom Philip had told me. Involuntarily I looked around at James Minor. He was crouched on the stern-sheets locker, his face reddened with shame, and his whole body shaking as though in a quartan ague. The woman gave him a glance of contemptuous appraisal, but made no sign of recognition. Supporting herself on one elbow, she looked down on our workaday craft, singling out Jesus for her particular notice.

"Hail, Rabbi!" she exclaimed, "are you that prophet which cometh down from heaven and giveth life unto the world? Here

in Capernaum; of all places!"

The Master seemed neither to look nor to listen, but Mary of Magdala was not to be rebuffed; she smiled mischievously as she lolled back on her couch. "They say I have seven devils," she went on. "It is true, for there they are," and she pointed to the black slaves who sat on the rowing benches; the seventh member of the crew, a gigantic Abyssinian, stood immediately behind his mistress, holding the tiller in his knotted hand. "Yet you may speak freely before my familiars, since each has had his eardrums pierced and his tongue plucked out by the roots. Tell me then, Rabbi, about this divine provision of which if a man eat he shall live forever. For indeed I am weary of my stupid lovers and of the dull delights of Tiberias; I am surfeited with cakes and dainties, with fat goose livers and peacock tongues, with honied sherbet and wine cooled by snow from Hermon. Sell me, I beg of you, a portion of that immortal food, the veritable bread from heaven." She leaned over the low rail and tossed a small but heavy bag into our boat; it struck with a clink of golden coin upon the gunwale and then bounded off into the deeper water.

Jesus looked up to her. "Blessed are the pure in heart," he

said, "for they shall see God."

An instantaneous fury convulsed the woman's face. "Oars!" she shouted, her eyes alight with the green fire of the African jungle, her white teeth clenched upon the full lower lip. "Oars!" she called again. Then realizing that the deafmute at the tiller could not catch the sound of her voice, she turned and struck at him with an ivory-handled whip of hippopotamus hide, the thong clipping the black on the cheek and cutting out a triangular piece of flesh. Immediately the rowers bent to their task, and the barge bearing Mary of Magdala and her seven devils headed back for Tiberias. Jesus beckoned James Minor to his side, and placed an arm around the shaking shoulders; at once they ceased to tremble.

On my way up to the inn I caught sight of a hooded figure, that of a woman gliding along the seashore. She had a basket in her arm; it must be Ruth going to the den where Reuel

waited for the food which should sustain his wretched existence. A tingle of tears prickled my eyelids.

At an early hour of the following morning we started on the journey to Jerusalem, the company comprising the Master, John, James Minor, and myself.

THE HOLY CITY

T was on the late afternoon of the third day that we reached Jerusalem. Our route had been through Samaria and thence to the elevated plateau of Judæa, passing by the ancient cities of Bethel and Ramah. At the latter place Judas of Kerioth joined the party. The pallor of his face contrasted even more vividly than usual with the sable hue of his garments, and he looked drawn and ill, as though torn by some recent John scowled as physical disturbance or spiritual conflict. Judas made his appearance, being still resentful of his mysterious desertion of our company, a few months earlier, at Capernaum. But Philip had his accustomed genial smile for the wanderer, quite as though they had parted only on the previous night, and Tesus received him with a quiet warmth of greeting; evidently the old-time bond of friendship still held between them. John indeed began some sarcastic questioning, but the Master stopped him with a look and nothing more was said on the subject.

A turn in the cliff-bordered road. As though moved by a common impulse, we halted and looked in silence. Before us lay the Holy City sitting serene upon her pale hills of stone; her battlemented walls and towers etched clear against the distant, lilac-blue line of the mountains of Moab; the yellow radiance of the westering sun illuminating her vast mass of pinnacles and parapets and domes and terraces and roofs, and making it to glow as though by the light of a lamp; dominating all, the white-and-gold bulk of the Temple on Mount Moriah, the chosen habitation of the Most High and the place where His honour dwelleth; Jerusalem the delight and wonder of the whole world

-Jerusalem!

Together we stood and looked; then led by Philip's powerful baritone, we sang the ancient pilgrim greeting:

I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help.

I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord.

Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem. Jerusalem is builded as a city that is compact together; Whither the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord * * * to give thanks unto the name of the Lord. They that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth forever. As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about his people, from henceforth, even forever.

We were to enter the city by the Corner Gate in the western wall, overlooked on the right by the dark bulk of Herod's palace, the official residence of the Roman governors of Judæa. As we drew near, we became conscious of a monotonous sound like to the moaning of the winter wind in a leafless forest. A few more steps and we recognized the source of this dismal threnody, the customary congress of wastrels and mendicants which sprawled on either side of the gateway, a brown writhing mass that, at first sight, seemed to have nothing of humanity about it, a mere congeries of nameless crawling things which recalled the terrible picture painted by the Prophet Micah: "They shall lick the dust like a serpent, they shall move out of their holes like worms of the earth." And yet they were veritable men and women, lying prostrate on the bare ground and unvielding rocks, huddled together for reciprocal warmth against the increasing chill of the early spring evening, their pains and fears and bitter need made vocal in that continuous and soul-shaking cry for mercy and succour.

However—so I told myself—one must not be carried away by a wave of facile and unthinking sentimentality. Most of these wretches, perhaps all of them, were professional beggars who made a trade of their physical ills and deformities. Whereupon I hardened my heart against those whining voices and stepped quickly away, seeking to keep my skirts free from the clutch of those greedy hands. And then I saw something that was different; I stopped short.

The creature lay on his stony couch with one lower limb, a clubfoot, dangling over the ledge and so livid with cold as to resemble a purple beet. A bony knee was made hideous by a fungoid tumour which in colour and texture was like to a crushed pomegranate. The face under the greasy black cowl—how can I describe it except to say that it possessed but one recognizable feature, a half-opened slit of famished mouth. But the really appalling component of this mass of human wreckage

was the right hand which protruded from that heap of rags and tatters; it was of a cinder-grey hue and all of its digits were gone; there remained only the thumb, which moved in little convulsive jerks. A deathly qualm seized me and I started to avert

my eyes.

Before me strode the Master. He had not been deceived by the trickeries of this "rogues' gallery" and their mechanically voiced lamentations, and he had walked steadily onward. And then he saw what I had seen; he also stopped short. But only for the briefest moment; without a word he bent down and took that dreadful hand into his own warm grasp; then he lifted to his feet the object which once had been a man, and the strangely assorted pair made their slow way towards a projecting pier of the mighty wall; presently they had disappeared from view.

No one had ventured to interpose or follow and perhaps a couple of minutes passed; then Jesus reappeared and he was quite alone. Once more his gaze swept over the unclean rabble at the gate, his lips curved in a smile half-ironical and half-tender—but wholly understanding. The supplications and howlings had ceased as though in obedience to a common impulse; then, from behind that mysterious buttress, uprose a single strong and resolute voice, and these are the words which it uttered:

O give thanks unto the Lord; for he is good: for his mercy endureth forever.

The Master had signed to us to resume the march and we obeyed. As we passed through the gateway and into the city street I could still hear the repetitions of that triumphal refrain: "O give thanks unto the Lord; for he is good," and I was glad to rejoice with that unseen adorer of the Everlasting Mercy.

When we had reached the centre of the city, Judas, who had been walking some distance ahead in company with the Master, rejoined us. "Jesus asks me to tell you," he said, "that he has decided to go on alone to Bethany where he will spend the night with friends—Lazarus and his two sisters. He will meet us in the Temple area at the sixth hour, or midday, to-morrow. Also he requests that you, Nathanael, will purchase the lamb for the Passover Feast and have it duly offered in the Temple. I propose that we seek lodgings for the night with my acquaintance Ben-Jared, who keeps a small hostel near by. This way."

We followed Judas obediently, although my heart, for one, was heavy; deprived of the guiding hand of the Master we were but sheep without a shepherd, and even the accustomed evening shades seemed to close in more darkly about us.

After the consumption of our simple meal, we sat for a while under the inn arcade with a brasier of glowing charcoal to temper the bite of the night wind. One common thought was in all our minds, and presently Philip, with his usual frankness, voiced it.

"What was it that really happened at the gateway?" he demanded. "That dreadful creature! One would have thought the only possible kindness—you know what I mean—would be a swift ending to his misery. A knock on the head, the slightest push, perhaps, against a sharp corner of the wall; all over. But, of course, that is unthinkable of the Master."

"Jesus could not have given money to relieve the man's necessity," remarked John. "As you know, the Master never carries any money on his person."

"I think Jesus must have healed him," said James Minor with entire simplicity. "Oh, you need not smile, Nathanael. Have you forgotten the hurt to my head that day at Capernaum when we had the trouble with Hananiah and his rabble? A mere touch of Jesus' hand and the pain was gone. Yes, the Master healed him; I am sure of it."

"Jesus is a wonder-worker," put in Judas assertively. "Our friend here"—he glanced at me—"is sceptical, but I have known of even greater miracles than this. And there will come a time when Bar-Talmai, for all of his fine Greek learning, will see with his own eyes and hear with his own ears. Then he will have to acknowledge that I know what I am talking about."

"At least one thing is undeniable," summed up Philip. "Jesus must have taken the wretch away for some good purpose; else why bother to stir up that heap of corruption? Also that purpose must have been accomplished, since the Master returned alone and with a smile on his lips. I think James Minor has the right of the matter, and, anyway, I am tired and want to get to sleep." Whereupon Philip rose, yawned noisily, and stamped off in search of a spare pallet of straw. The others were quick to follow his example, but I lingered for some little time over the slowly dying brasier. How could such things he? How could they! But even as I fortified myself in my scepticism, I seemed to hear again that clear and resolute voice:

O give thanks unto the Lord; for he is good: for his mercy endureth forever.

An hour before dawn I started alone for the Temple area. Since Ben-Jared's inn was situated in Zion, or the upper city, it was necessary for me to cross the stone bridge which spanned the Tyrophœon, or Valley of the Cheesemakers, in order to reach Mount Moriah. The bridge was a massive structure of hewn stone, and it rose in eight splendid arches far above the floor of the ravine. Even at this early hour it was thronged with pilgrims bound on the same pious errand as myself; together we

plodded on in silence.

Now the eastern sky was lightening perceptibly, and the vast bulk of the Temple stood out in impressive majesty; here was the very heart of Jewry, the house fashioned by men's hands and yet the abode of the Almighty, the one place in all the world in which the finite might have communion with the Infinite, the sole avenue of approach by which sinful man might make his peace with the Holy One of Israel. For centuries this had been a sacred spot. On the bare spur of rock which formed the actual summit of Mount Moriah, tradition held that Adam had made his initial offering to Jehovah of the first fruits of the earth, and it had also been the scene of Abraham's contemplated sacrifice of his son Isaac. More authentic history identified the rock with that threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite, which David purchased at a great price. Here the Shepherd King had planned to erect a permanent structure to take the place of the original Tabernacle, but he was not allowed to carry out his purpose; and it was Solomon, his son, who actually built the first Temple. After its complete destruction at the period of the Babylonish exile, the second Temple, that of Zerubbabel, came into being; it could not compare in beauty and costliness with its prototype, but it served the purpose of the prescribed ritual. Now it was being replaced by this magnificent third Temple, that of King Herod, the work being so planned that the old construction gradually gave place to the new, thereby avoiding any interruption of the canonical services. For some six-and-forty years the process of rebuilding had been going on, and it would be a full generation hence before the work would be completed. Yet even in its unfinished state it stood pre-eminent as the most beautiful building in the world; its masonry consisting of immense blocks of white marble, its roofs overlaid with thin plates of pure gold, its series of columned porticos giving the impression of a veritable forest of stone, while its endless ranges of courts and galleries and terraces and staircases and tunnels constituted a city in itself, capable of affording standing-room for an immense congregation of worshippers. Such a mighty spectacle!

so distracting to the eye and so confusing to the mind that surely it would require an ordinary lifetime to unravel all the complexities of its labyrinthine maze—the Temple, the very centre and core of our national life, the enduring symbol of that glorious future when there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall arise out of Israel.

Sunrise was now close at hand. Upon the tower at the southeast corner of the principal colonnade stood a white-robed priest waiting for the coming of the new day. Beneath him lay the walls and tessellated pavement of the Temple enclosure; and, at the bottom of the sheer descent, stretched the boulder-strewn floor of the Kidron valley, nearly an eighth of a Roman mile below his point of vantage. The sentinel keeps his eyes fixed on the distant horizon. "Is the sky lit up as far as Hebron?" comes the eager inquiry from the assembled priests. "It is lit up as far as Hebron," responds the watcher on the pinnacle, and presently the first fiery arrow of the sun-god speeds over the rim of the Moabitish hills and shivers upon the golden target of the Temple roof. The watcher waves a signal to his colleague in the great court; and he, in turn, conveys the message to the priests in the Sanctuary. Immediately the silver trumpets ring out their triple peal announcing the hour of the morning sacrifice; the outer gates are flung open, and the expectant throng surge into the marble-paved Court of the Gentiles.

It had been many a long year since I had gone up to the Passover Feast. Forgetful of racial and religious obligations in my pursuit of Hellenic culture, I had stood, perhaps wilfully, apart from my brethren of the Covenant. But now, as I gazed once more upon that amazing spectacle, the blood throbbed in my temples and I caught my breath with a gasp; after all, I was a Jew and a son of the *Torah*, and I was glad again to realize the splendour of my birthright. For indeed it was a goodly heritage

upon which my eyes now rested.

Running along the southern side of the Court of the Gentiles rose a superb colonnade, the central passage being formed by eighty pillars of Corinthian marble each a hundred Roman feet in height. Subsidiary rows of fifty-two columns enclosed the two flanking side aisles. Around the other sides of the court were similar colonnades, but of more modest dimensions. All of these pillared aisles were roofed with cedar, and so formed cloisters in which the people might find refuge from sun and rain. Be it understood that the Court of the Gentiles was open to men of every nation and faith, but along the inner, or western, side of

the enclosure ran a low marble screen beyond which no alien foot might pass. For here was the Stone of Forbidding upon which was carved an inscription in Greek—the universal language—warning the uncircumcised intruder that his blood would be upon his own head should he dare to enter the area sacred to

the Chosen People; and to them alone.

At the middle section of this screen a flight of steps led to a terrace upon which was erected the lofty wall enclosing the complex of inner courts and buildings. This wall was pierced by nine openings of which the most imposing was the splendid archway of the Gate Beautiful. Folding doors of olive wood, decorated with arabesques of gold and silver, closed the eight subsidiary entrances, but the valves of the Gate Beautiful were made of Corinthian brass and of a weight so stupendous that it required the united effort of a score of men to move them. Even as I stood there, the great leaves were drawn open, and I gazed through the gateway upon the noble fabric of the Temple proper, which, facing directly east, overlooked the leafy slope of the Mount of Olives. Built in the massive Græco-Roman architectural style, the sacred structure would have suggested a fortress rather than a shrine were it not for the exceeding richness of its decorative features; in particular, the blinding splendour of its golden-plated roofs. Masculine strength, then, but softened by feminine grace and beauty; truly this must have been the vision in the prophetic eyes of King David when he voiced his majestic song and antiphon:

> Lift up your heads, O ye gates; And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; And the King of glory shall come in.

Who is this King of glory?
The Lord of hosts, he is the King of glory.

Already the outer court was thronged with the dealers in oxen, sheep, and doves for the Temple sacrifices; and under the colonnades were ranged the tables of the money-changers bearing
overflowing bowls of bronze and silver, their proprietors indicating their calling by a coin suspended from the left ear. I stopped
and exchanged a Roman aureus into Temple coinage in order
that I might purchase the Paschal lamb and also provide the
half-shekel tribute money for each member of our company;
these having been my instructions from the Master. Then, carrying the little animal in my arms, I passed through the Gate

Beautiful and into the so-called Court of the Women. This nomenclature was not rigidly exact, since both sexes had access to its precincts, the exclusive quarters for the women being the latticed galleries which extended along the north and south sides of the enclosure. Fifteen steps led to the upper court which was divided into two parts by a boundary wall—the narrower portion forming the Court of Israel and the wider that of the Priests; upon the platform of the latter stood the Laver and the great Altar of Sacrifice. In Solomon's Temple this Altar was made of brazen metal, but in our time it had been replaced by one built of unhewn stone. Ordinarily the laity were excluded from the Court of the Priests, but since I was to make an offering I was permitted to ascend the steps and present myself and my burden to the priests who stood in a long row attired in their ritual vestments. These consisted of under-garments of linen—coat and breeches—with an outer robe of blue, richly embroidered and having a row of golden bells attached to the skirt; the ephod, in the case of the ordinary priests, was of plain, white linen.

One of the attendants gave me a gold-handled knife of sacrifice. I slew the lamb. The nearest priest caught the steaming blood in a silver bowl, passing it on to the next in line, and he to his neighbour until it reached the officiant at the Altar; the latter took the basin and poured its contents into a stone channel at the base of the structure, this channel connecting with a subterranean conduit cut through the hidden Rock of Sacrifice, and eventually emptying into the brook Kidron. For the blood, being the life of the animal, could neither be eaten nor consumed by fire; it must be returned to the elemental earth from which it

had been engendered.

While the Levites continued to chant the hallel, the song of praise which commemorates Israel's deliverance from the Egyptian captivity, the portions of the lamb reserved for the Paschal Feast were placed on a metal dish and offered at the Altar. Then the sacred fragments were returned to me, the fore-legs of the lamb crossed after the traditional fashion, and I prepared to take my departure; I was glad to get away, for I was beginning to feel faint in this atmosphere of continually flowing blood whose acrid odour could be stifled only in part by the vapours of burning incense. But as I was entering a side exit to the lower court, an aged priest accosted me. "Are you not the son of my friend, Joseph of Arimathæa?" he asked. "His nephew," I amended. "Bar-Talmai is my name." "At least your face is familiar," he went on gracefully, "and I remember now that since Joseph has no son to carry on the family traditions, he

nourishes the hope that you may be inclined to become his successor in the headship of the Course of Sheckaniah and on the Great Council."

"The matter is being considered," I answered stiffly. "But

as yet I have come to no decision."

The old man frowned. "There is no greater service for a son of Abraham," he said, "than to minister in the house of the Lord. Look at me. In outward appearance I am only an humble country priest. Zacharias is my name. But a generation ago the lot of offering the incense at the morning sacrifice fell upon me. From henceforth I am accounted 'rich,' having enjoyed the supreme honour that can be conferred—and that but once in a lifetime. Moreover, to me was accorded the further favour of an angelic vision announcing the birth of my son John, the child of my old age—a Nazarite from his mother's womb upon whom should be laid the spirit and power of Elijah, a prophet ordained to turn the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to prepare the way of the Lord."

"The Baptist!" I exclaimed. "I have seen and heard him. But always he speaks of one greater than he, who shall come after

him."

"True, and it is Israelites like yourself who should be the watchmen on the walls of Zion, waiting for the first lightening in the heavens of the Dayspring from on High. But, Bar-Talmai, I have heard your uncle speak of you with sorrow, how you have been infected with the materialistic doctrines of the Gentile world, all under the guise of the pursuit of learning. Ah, there is a higher knowledge to be acquired in this Temple of Adonai than you will ever find in the schools of Alexandria or in the shady groves of Athens. You look your disbelief; then come with me."

I hung back. "I have no liking for theological arguments," I protested. "Perhaps there is something behind Nature—something greater and more potent than Nature can ever be; I say perhaps. But I do not know, and neither do you. Why wrangle about it?"

Zacharias looked at me reproachfully. "The Sadducean corrosive has bitten deeply into your soul," he said. "All the more reason that the eyes of your understanding should be enlightened. Come," and he indicated the entrance to the Holy Place.

"It is not lawful," I objected, "except for those who wear the distinctive mark of the priesthood—I mean the purple robe."

"Remember that I am a 'rich' priest," he retorted, "and so none may venture to question the propriety of my actions; this

indeed is about the only usufruct which I enjoy from the honourable condition I hold among my brethren. Moreover, at this

particular hour we are not likely to encounter anyone."

I hesitated no longer, and frankly I may acknowledge that the spur of curiosity was pricking me sharply. Zacharias showed me where I could leave the platter containing the consecrated Paschal lamb, and then we passed behind a screen of ebony wood, intricately carved and picked out in gold leaf, which extended to such a height that it effectually veiled us from observation on the part of the Temple officials.

The approach to the Holy Place was simple but impressive. Twelve wide stone steps led up from the level of the Court of the Priests to the Sanctuary vestibule. The great double door, panelled in precious metals and ornamented by a golden grape trellis with the fruit in full bearing, was screened off by a curtain of rich Babylonian tapestry. Pushing the latter aside, Zacharias

motioned me to precede him; we entered.

In the first and second Temples the ground-plan measurements of the Sanctuary were about ninety Roman feet by thirty, the Holy of Holies occupying the interior third of the area. Herod, in the rebuilding, had retained the linear proportions, but had considerably increased the height of the roof line, an admirable architectural improvement. There were no windows in the side walls, and the only attempt of fenestration was where the ends of the roof-beams rested on the masonry and projected to form the cornice; here could be seen a series of small channels, intended probably for ventilation since they gave little or no light.

The centre of the chamber was occupied by the Altar of Incense, made of cedar wood overlaid by plates of gold. On the north or right-hand wall was the Table of Shewbread, and on the south side stood the gigantic Menorah lamp with its seven arms; this piece of sacred furniture was made of pure gold and so heavy that six strong men could barely lift it. All the minor

utensils were also of gold.

In spite of my veneer of western culture, I felt a surge of racial pride as I gazed upon this shrine of Israel's once glorious past and still strongly beating heart. And then my eyes travelled to the far end of the Oracle where hung the Veil which hid from profane sight the Holy of Holies. It was a double curtain and depended, of course, from roof to pavement; the two portions were separated by a space of three or four feet. The outer veil was open only at the north end, the inner one only at the south end; thus the High Priest, entering the Holy

of Holies once a year on the Day of Atonement, could do so without risk of exposing the sacred interior. Upon the darkly rich surface of the outer covering a single word was embroidered in gold thread—that Name which written as YAHVEH was always paraphrased in spoken speech as Adonai, meaning Lord or the All-Blessed. For since His Name is holy, it can never be

pronounced aloud by sinful and mortal lips.

Long and thoughtfully I gazed at that impenetrable barrier dividing the world of living men from the domain of the greater powers, the very arcanum of God-if indeed God were behind that veil. Yet the Holy of Holies was absolutely empty save for the low flat stone called Shetia upon which the High Priest was accustomed to place his censer when he came to perform his yearly office of making satisfaction for the sins of Israel. According to rabbinic tradition, this "Foundation Stone" covers the mouth of the pit and is the primal stuff out of which the world was made by the hands of God. Just this and nothing more, for no longer stands upon Shetia the Ark of the Covenant overshadowed by the outstretched wings of the golden cherubim; no longer in the Holy of Holies shines the intolerable splendour of the Shekinah, that invisible evidence of the abiding presence of God among His Chosen People. Solomon's great Temple had gone down in the tempest of the first captivity. Not a stick, not a stone had remained upon its fellow; and even if the Ark had been carried away to Babylon together with the other treasures of the Temple, its subsequent fate remains a mystery; we know only that it never came back to Jerusalem, and that the Holy of Holies in both Zerubbabel's fane and Herod's grandiose reconstruction stood dark, silent, tenantless.

An empty room! What was there in this commonplace physical fact which should overawe my coolly philosophical mind? And yet I knew perfectly well that by no possible exercise of will-power could I take one single further step towards that seemingly vacant apartment. Zacharias had forewarned me that something lay behind the curtain bearing the ineffable Name; something invisible, inaudible, and intangible—and yet unmistakably and eternally real; the very stuff and essence of Being; the substance of that effectual Fact which all men, throughout all the ages, have identified with their conception of the great First Cause. That little chamber of the Holy of Holies might be void to mortal sight, but I knew beyond peradventure that he who entered there would be standing in the presence of very God. My knees trembled, my eyes had gone dim. I felt

a pressure upon my arm, and now Zacharias was guiding me gently from the Sanctuary, down the steps and into the tiny cubicle set apart for his occupancy while engaged in his turn of service at the Temple. Presently my sight cleared again, and I met the kindly, understanding gaze of the old priest. "I am but a foolish child," I murmured. "And more than that, a presumptuous one."

"But it is of the essence of a child's nature, Bar-Talmai, that he is able to learn; later on, the process becomes increasingly difficult. Now, at least, you have started upon the road. It may be long and it may be toilsome, but there is no turning in

it; ever it goes steadily onward."

True, and yet at that moment, neither Zacharias nor I dreamed how long and how hard that road was to prove itself, nor to what heights of certainty and knowledge it was finally to lead me.

We fell to talking further upon the endless subject of Israel's glory and Israel's shame. "How could it be possible," I asked, "that God allowed the Holy of Holies to be desecrated and the Ark to be carried away by the profane hands of Nebuzar-adan and his Chaldæans? Could not the Almighty protect His own honour? And why did not Adonai reclaim the Ark from Babylon as He did aforetime from Exdod?"

Zacharias glanced at me shrewdly. "Are you so sure," he said, "that all these things happened? The Temple, of course, was totally destroyed, but might it not be possible that the High Priest, acting under the direct commands of the Almighty, had previously taken the Ark of the Covenant from the Holy of Holies, and hidden it in some secret ward?"

"It is possible, certainly."

"Then some day, perhaps even in our time, the Ark may be brought from its concealment, and restored to its rightful place. But first must the people bring forth fruits meet for repentance. The grossest profanations of God's House may not be debited to alien hands; it is by those of Israel that the deepest wounds have been inflicted. Have you never heard the third vision of the prophet Ezekiel?" He took a roll from a cupboard and began to read:

"Son of man, seest thou what they do? even the great abominations that the house of Israel committeth here, that I should go far off from my sanctuary? but turn yet again, and thou shalt see greater abominations. And he brought me to the door of the court; and when I looked, behold a hole in the wall. Then said he unto me, Son of man, dig now in the wall; and when I

had digged in the wall, behold a door. And he said unto me, Go in, and behold the wicked abominations that they do here. So I went and saw; and behold every form of creeping things, and abominable beasts, and all the idols of the house of Israel, portrayed upon the wall round about. And there stood before them seventy men of the ancients of the house of Israel, and in the midst of them stood Jaazaniah the son of Shaphan, with every man his censer in his hand; and a thick cloud of incense went up. Then said he unto me, Son of man, hast thou seen what the ancients of the house of Israel do in the dark, every man in the chamber of his imagery? for they say, The Lord seeth us not; the Lord hath forsaken the earth.

"He said also unto me, Turn thee yet again, and thou shalt see greater abominations that they do. Then he brought me to the door of the gate of the Lord's house which was toward the north; and, behold, there sat women weeping for Tammuz.

"Then said he unto me, Hast thou seen this, O son of man? turn thee yet again, and thou shalt see greater abominations than these. And he brought me into the inner court of the Lord's house; and, behold, at the door of the temple of the Lord, between the porch and the altar, were about five and twenty men, with their backs toward the temple of the Lord, and their faces toward the east; and they worshipped the sun toward the east.

"Then he said unto me, Hast thou seen this, O son of man? Is it a light thing to the house of Judah that they commit the abominations which they commit here? * * * Therefore will I also deal in fury; mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity: and though they cry in my ears with a loud voice, yet will I not hear them."

I nodded. "It has been ever thus," I assented gloomily; "all through Israel's history. I wonder that the Almighty has been able to keep His hands off so froward a people; that, for the second time, He has not swept the earth bare of the human insects who despoil and pollute it. Listen to that unholy din which even now affronts our ears: doth He not hear?"

Penetrating the thick walls of the Holy Place came the tumult from the market now in full swing in the distant Court of the Gentiles: the grunting of animals and the squawking of birds; the shrill voices of hucksters and bargain hunters, together with the incessant clinking of coin. The face of Zacharias grew dark as he listened, but he said nothing more.

It was close upon midday and I must go to keep my appointment with the Master. Whereupon I reclaimed the dish con-

taining the ritual portions of the Paschal lamb; with a brief farewell to Zacharias, I resumed my interrupted progress to the Court of the Gentiles.

The great space was thronged, but even as I entered the enclosure the shouting and the tumult died; then the silence was broken. But only a single voice was speaking—the voice of the Master.

"Is it not written," he said, "My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer? But ye have made it a den of thieves."

I pressed forward and mingled with the crowd that was gathered about the table of Reuben Ben-Joses, reputed the chief among the money-changers. Opposite him stood Jesus, and his tall, slight figure seemed literally to tower above the downcast heads of those who listened. With a swift movement the Master plucked from Philip's girdle the scourge of small cords which the latter habitually carried after his old-time custom, and held it aloft in majestic menace.

From the account given by John of this incident it might be inferred that Jesus employed physical violence to cleanse the Temple of its desecrators, that the whip was actually used upon the persons of those insolent traffickers in sacred things. But not so; how could he who loved all men have laid his hands in anger—albeit righteous anger—upon even the worst of sinners; the very thought is incredible. Nor was such action in the least degree necessary; for Reuben, cowering under the authoritative gaze of Jesus, sprang up in so great haste that he upset the table at which he was sitting; the piles of coin slithering to the pavement and rolling and clinking in every direction. Yet not an eye followed their course, not a hand reached down to retrieve the treasure. With a smothered cry, Reuben turned and ran towards the gate; as though moved by a common impulse, he was followed by the entire crowd of merchants and money brokers.

"A den of thieves!" re-echoed Peter; impulsive as ever he dashed from table to table, overturning them and their precious contents with a zealous alacrity which checked only when he caught the calm command in the Master's eyes. In the meantime Philip and John and James Minor were passing from stall to stall, removing the hobbles which restrained the oxen and sheep, and opening the cages which housed the sacrificial doves and pigeons. The birds, fluttering their wings, soared into free air, and the animals poured in disorderly flight through the wide-open gate of the Temple enclosure; in hardly more time

than it takes to tell of it the confusion was at an end, and in the great square remained only Jesus and his little company of disciples. "My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer," repeated the Master; and as the chanting of the priests in the inner court swelled forth again in majestic sonority, we sank to our knees; the cleansing of the Temple had been accomplished.

That night we ate the Passover in the town house of Joseph of Arimathæa. My uncle, having endured a severe attack of his asthmatic malady, had been unable to come up to Jerusalem for the Paschal week, and, of course, Lilli had remained with him in Galilee. The house was accordingly tenanted only by Ezra, the caretaker; but, since he knew me well, he made no scruple about placing at my disposal the accommodations we required for the celebration of the Passover.

I experienced a curious sense of depression as I passed through those familiar passages and rooms now empty of their accustomed occupants; at every turn I seemed to hear the deep rumble of my uncle's voice or catch the rustle of Lilli's silken robe. And then, upon a divan, I noticed a knot of rose-coloured ribbon which might have fallen from Lilli's very head.

I may as well confess my weakness, if such it may be called; I snatched up the scented trifle and thrust it deep into the bosom of my linen tunic. Then I glanced up to find the Master at my side; he must have seen, but he only smiled.*

As we approached the large room where we were to eat the Paschal lamb, I caught the first strains of the one hundred and fourteenth psalm, the melody uplifted by John's clear tenor and buttressed by Peter's booming bass:

When Israel came out of Egypt: and the house of Judah from among the strange people.

Only here and there was there a discordant note. But that, of course, would be Judas; never could the man from Kerioth be trusted to carry even the simplest of tunes.

^{*}Perhaps I should mention that in all the period of my intimacy with Jesus I never heard Him laugh out loud, although a smile was ever hovering about His lips. For there is a difference. A smile is always tender and understanding, while in a laugh there may be a jarring element; either the guffaw of a vacant mind—the crackling of thorns under a pot—or a touch of malice at the awkwardness or discomfiture of another. Even a dog appreciates this fine distinction; he responds inevitably to a smile, but he resents being laughed at.

VI

"SO GOD LOVED THE WORLD"

T was the fourth night after the Passover and Jesus was a guest of Rachel, a well-to-do and pious widow woman who occupied, with her daughters, a commodious dwelling in the ancient city of David, not far from the Fountain Gate. The Master had requested that I should be lodged with him, since he had occasional use for my services as an amanuensis in writing to his family and the other friends at Capernaum. It may seem strange that I never knew the Master to set down anything in permanent form; whatever we possess of his casual words or more formal discourse have all been preserved for us in the records of the four Evangelists. Of course, Jesus was acquainted with the use of tablet and stylus, since he had received, in the village school of Nazareth, the accustomed education of a Jewish youth. But, apparently, he preferred the spoken to the written word, the spirit to the letter; moreover, he must have foreseen that we who listened should not forget.

There were three of us in the upper room of Rachel's house that night—the Master, John, and I—the other disciples having returned to their quarters in Ben-Jared's inn. John was busy repairing a sandal, while I had just finished transcribing an affectionate message from Jesus to his mother Mary, which could be intrusted to one of our fellow-townsmen who was

returning on the morrow to Galilee.

It was a gusty spring evening with the waning Paschal moon visible only now and then through the wrack of clouds drifting up from the Great Sea; the streets were deserted save for a few belated wayfarers battling against the wind and the occasional flurries of snowflakes; soon it would be time to seek our pallets. Then I heard the sound of footsteps on the outer stairway which gave access to our apartment, followed by a hesitating knock on the door; I went and opened it.

A man stood on the threshold closely wrapped in a *simlah*, a rectangular, seamless piece of coarse woolen cloth, so folded and sewn together that the garment was left open on either side for the free movement of the arms. His head was muffled in a

black cashmere shawl thickly powdered with snow-crystals, and nothing of his countenance was discernible save a pair of restless almost furtive eyes. Evidently the stranger was desirous of escaping observation, for, with a quick glance over his shoulder, he slipped into the room and closed the door behind him, taking care that it should make no sound as it swung into place; he looked at the Master and then, with obvious uncertainty, at

John and me.

What Jesus said to him I could not catch; but the words must have been reassuring, since the visitor proceeded to divest himself of head-dress and cloak; in obedience to the Master's invitation, he took a seat on the divan at Jesus' side. Now I recognized him as Nicodemus, a Pharisee of eminence and a ruler among the Jews; also he was a friend to Joseph of Arimathæa, and I had met him at my uncle's house on one or two occasions. Naturally the elderly and well-placed Nicodemus would have no recollection of my insignificant self; and so, after putting some fresh charcoal in the brasier, I retired to my own corner; I should have left the apartment altogether had I not understood from a glance of the Master's eye that he wished me to remain. John, sitting in the deep background, continued to busy himself with his cobbling.

For a few minutes no word was exchanged on either side. The Master waited for the visitor to explain his errand; and Nicodemus, evidently labouring under strong excitement, seemed either unwilling to speak or unable to couch his inquiry in appropriate terms. And then, with an almost explosive energy, he burst forth: "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him——" He stopped abruptly as

though uncertain how to proceed.

Jesus looked at him steadily before replying; then he answered—so amazingly—and I leaned forward to listen. "Verily, verily," he began, "I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

Nicodemus shook his head. "How can a man be born again?" he objected. "Can he enter the second time into his

mother's womb, and be born?"

"Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit," reiterated Jesus, "he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. * * * Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit."

"How can these things be?" asked Nicodemus, and his voice was hardly above a whisper.

For a moment or two Jesus seemed to consider; then he spoke: "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must

the Son of man be lifted up."

Both men had risen to their feet; the Master erect and commanding, Nicodemus with downcast head and limbs that trembled perceptibly. And then came those never-to-be-forgotten words: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

The lips of Nicodemus moved, but no word issued from them. Again came the voice of Jesus, and now there was a great sadness in its cadence: "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. * * * But he that doeth

truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest,

that they are wrought in God."

When again I looked up, Nicodemus and I were alone in the room. John had slipped away homeward, and Jesus must have silently withdrawn to the housetop for one of his accustomed periods of prayer and meditation. Nicodemus began fumbling with his outer robe, and I hastened to assist his uncertain fingers; then I brought his head-dress and adjusted the folds so as to conceal his face, although even an intimate acquaintance would hardly have been able to recognize its lineaments, so drawn and changed were they by the emotions which still possessed them.

"I will go down with you," I offered, "for by this late hour the servants will have barred the gate of the forecourt, and the

fastenings are not easy for a stranger to manage."

I led the way, Nicodemus following; once or twice I sensed that he stumbled slightly. Withdrawing the bolts, I pushed open the door. The snow squalls had ceased, and the sinking moon shone in a frosty sky; the street was quiet and empty.

Up to this time the old man had not uttered a word, but now

he turned to me. "It is incredible!" he muttered.

"To be born again?" I suggested.

"That of course. But there is an even greater mystery—So God loved the world——" His voice shook.

"That he gave his only-begotten Son," I prompted.

"That whosoever believeth in him —" "Should have everlasting life," I finished.

Was there some jarring note in my voice? Nicodemus glanced

at me sharply. "You can believe that—and in this Jesus?" he demanded.

"I do not know; honestly I do not know."

"Yet you are one of his disciples; you follow him. Why?"

"I say again that I cannot be sure."

"I am old and fearful of many things. But you are young and of a good courage. I can find it in my heart to envy you."

"Not so," I protested. "I mean that that is not the reason for my discipleship."

r my discipleship.

"What then?"

"It is because I love Jesus of Nazareth; I can make no other answer."

"Because you love him," he repeated. "A good answer, and perhaps—some day—I may be able to give it on my own account."

"And so to follow Jesus with me. Surely if Nicodemus ----"

"You know my name!"

"I am Bar-Talmai, nephew to your old friend, Joseph of Arimathæa."

"Again I say that I envy you," he reiterated, and there was a wistfulness in his speech that touched me. "Farewell, my son; some day we may meet again—when I too have learned to love him." He slipped through the half-opened door, and the shadow of his cloaked figure silhouetted itself for an instant upon the whitewashed wall of the house opposite; then he was gone.

I replaced the fastenings of the outer gate and ascended to the upper room. It was still untenanted, and I could not venture to intrude upon the privacy of the Master's quiet hour. I lay down on my couch, but sleep was far from my call. Again and again I recalled those incomprehensible pronouncements

of Jesus.

"To be born again!" A metaphor, of course, and I need not concern myself with such far excursions in the domain of pure fancy. Moreover, as Nicodemus had pointed out, there was still a greater mystery to be faced. "So God loved the world!" Why, what was postulated here? God as the creator and overlord of the cosmos, the sovereign judge of all menthis was an hypothesis in logical accord with my inherited creed. But a God who so loved the world that He could send Himself, in the person of His only-begotten Son, to redeem that world—truly this was a philosophy transcending everything in human experience. For consider the positive implication, the making of the carpenter's nominal son, Jesus of Nazareth, equal to

Yahveh Himself, partaker of the very nature of the Father Almighty. How could I believe that! How could such a conception agree with the principle laid down in the initial utterance of the Decalogue: "Thou shalt have none other gods but me." And could I give to a man, even to such a man as the Master, the worship and honour due to God alone?

From side to side I tossed on my narrow pallet. But always there returned to my mind that marvellous affirmation: "So God loved the world!" Was love then the reagent which could precipitate the cloudy mixture of my doubts and questionings? Whereupon I recalled a recent incident which had

moved me inexplicably.

The day after we had taken lodging with the widow Rachel, the Master and I had entered the narrow street which leads upward to Mount Moriah. As we walked, I became aware that something was following us; I looked back and saw that it was a dog, one of the ordinary outcast brutes who forever were ranging the quarter in search of food to sustain their lean bodies. But this particular animal seemed to have another object in view; he was following Jesus, slowly and at a respectful distance. But always he followed, drawn, apparently, by an irresistible attraction to the person of the Master. At me, he never vouch-safed a single glance.

At the intersection of a cross street the dog stopped, conscious that he had reached the limits of his lawful territory; he knew that if he trespassed, by a hand's breadth, into the district of a rival band he would instantly be torn to pieces by their teeth and claws. He continued to watch Jesus so long as we remained in sight. When we returned, several hours later, he was waiting; watchfully he attended us to the gate of Rachel's house. And when we went out the next morning the same dog was at his post of observation; again he trailed us as far as

he dared to go; again he awaited our reappearance.

A sorry-looking creature of nameless breed, his coat mangy and caked with soil, his ribs almost protruding through the tightly drawn skin, a pair of beseechingly liquid eyes his only claim to canine beauty. Remember that we of the Orient merely tolerate the dog as a scavenger, with occasional use of his services as a shepherd's aid in rounding up the flock; as an animal he is accounted unclean and of no value as compared to an ox or a sheep; the proverbial expression: "Is thy servant a dog that he should do this thing?" indicates the despite in which he is universally held. But I had lived in the great western centres of Brundisium and Rome, and my travels had led

me to the Hispanic peninsula and far northward into Gallia. Consequently I had observed that in these occidental countries the dog, from the fierce boarhound of the huntsman to the silky spaniel of my lady's chamber, is the close companion, the accepted friend of man. Also, I had become acquainted with one essential nature of the canine character—his need of a master and his devotion to that central object of his affections. For truly a dog without his human overlord is like to a ship deprived of its rudder. Often indeed he may steal away to seek the company of his kind. But not for long. He grows weary and dispirited, and then comes the master's whistle or his recalling halloo; instantly the truant is up and away to his owner's side, his joyful bark and incessantly wagging tail testifying, even plainer than words, to his gladness in the renewed relationship—the dog and his master.

It was amazing, but suddenly I realized what was happening; this pariah dog, obeying the obscure instinct of his race, was actually seeking a master. And he had fixed upon Jesus as the supreme end of his heart's desire. What response would Jesus make? In my own case I had studied this phenomenon of the mutual dependence between dog and man merely out of curiosity. I had never been tempted to possess one of these fine, upstanding creatures of the West, so different from the slinking curs of our alleyways, and I had never sought to offer a dog a pat on the head or even a friendly word. And Jesus was a Jew with, presumably, a far narrower viewpoint than my own. He had never once passed beyond the boundaries of Israel, and his natural attitude would be one of aversion to such a forlorn and useless creature; so far as I knew, he had never even noticed the beast.

On this very morning the dog had accompanied us as usual to the deadline of the cross street. Our return was not until late in the afternoon. The animal was at his post. But not on his feet and in the customary expectant attitude; no, he lay stretched on the low parapet of a garden wall, and it was evident that he had been badly, perhaps mortally, injured, for there was a gaping wound in his chest and one ear had been completely torn off; he breathed in convulsive gasps. Jesus glanced at him and stopped short.

The dog had not strength to raise his head, but his eyes fixed themselves upon the Master's face, and in them was an appeal, an appeal so insistent that even I could not fail to mark it. Yet what could anyone do for the brute except to put an end to his

misery? I stooped and picked up a stout stake.

But Jesus, stepping quickly forward, had seated himself on the parapet. And then he put out his hand and laid it on the creature's head, unmindful of the rough hair matted with blood and filth.

An amazed incredulity followed by the transfiguration of an ecstatic gladness filled the fast filming eyes of the dying animal; at the ultimate moment of existence he had attained his quest, he had found a master, his master. With a supreme effort the dog managed to raise his head and his stump of a tail made a single feeble movement. Then the rejoicing gleam in his eyes glazed over, the head again fell forward. The dog was dead.

We walked on in silence and entered the forecourt of our lodging house. On a southern-facing window-sill stood a pot of scarlet anemones in full bloom, Rachel being a famous hand with flowers. "Consider the lilies," murmured Jesus, "they toil not, neither do they spin; and yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these."

"Ah, but the lily is a thing of grace and beauty," I replied, "and he was but a dog—with no beauty that one should desire him. What could there be of less value in this world of ours? Unless it be one of those noisy brown sparrows upon the house-top."

"Are there not two sparrows sold for a farthing?" countered the Master. "And one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father." He passed on into the house.

How vividly it all came back to me as I lay on my straw pallet looking up at the stars. Consider the lilies; even a sparrow shall not fall without the Father's knowledge; happiness brought to a dying dog—what should these things mean unless it be that God does love the world? At least I could go this far on an unfamiliar road, and I should still be following Jesus; what else really mattered? A tranquillizing thought, and upon it I fell asleep.

I have just run across one of my former Roman associates, Lucius Sylla Verus, now Tribune of the Twelfth Legion in garrison at Jerusalem. For all that our paths in life had widely drawn apart, there remained an enduring bond of friendship between us in our mutual admiration of the Grecian *cultus*. And so when Verus happened to spy me in the Temple area, he came clattering down the steps which lead from the fortress of Antonia to the northwest corner of the outer court. "Nathanael!" he called eagerly, and I turned to greet him with an equal warmth.

A fine soldierly figure of a man, and the face which beamed on me from under the leathern helmet covered with plates of silver was an attractive one—a patrician clearness of outline, widely set eyes of hazel hue, and a straight line of lips which, upon occasion, could break into most engaging curves. By birth and breeding Verus was one of the world's fortunately placed, and he might have spent a life of luxurious idleness at the capital had he not been devoted to his profession of arms, preferring the rigorous virtues of the field to the effeminate vices of the imperial court.

"Come up with me to my quarters in the castle," he suggested. "I am free for a time from routine duty, and there are a couple of flasks of Falernian wine cooling in a bucket of snow. Moreover, I want to show you a collection of Hellenic medals recently forwarded by my doctor in Alexandria."

I assented and we climbed the steep range of steps which

gave access to the esplanade of the fortress.

"I could have sworn," he said, "that I saw you, Nathanael, in the Court of the Gentiles on the morning of the Passover. A tumult had started unexpectedly, and the hucksters and money brokers were swept away like chaff before the winnowing shovel. For a moment I thought it would be necessary to send down a few files of legionaries to restore order, but the affair was over as quickly as it had begun. Ah, those fractious Jews!"

"My countrymen, good Lucius."

Verus flushed under his coating of tan. "Your pardon, of course. But by Pollux! I never think of you as an Israelite, you the perfect cosmopolite, the accomplished citizen of the great world."

"No apology is needed," I smiled; "I have not always been keenly conscious of my racial inheritance. And, by the by, Lucius, your eyes did not play you false the other day. I was

there.'

Verus stared. "In company with that scatter-brained young rabbi from Nazareth!" he ejaculated. "I fear, my dear friend, that you are playing with fire. The Procurator is contemplating severe measures against these disturbers of the Pax Romana, and he is not to be trifled with."

"I do not think you need concern yourself unduly about Jesus of Nazareth," I answered. "But let me explain."

"We will discuss the matter over the Falernian," laughed

Verus. "This way, Nathanael."

But our converse had to be deferred; for, from the direction of the lower city, a retinue of importance was now entering the citadel. Verus sprang to his feet. "It must be; it is, the Governor himself!" he exclaimed.

The little procession was headed by six white-robed lictors, each bearing the *fasces*, a bundle of rods bound about an axe, the Roman ensign of authority. Following them came a detachment of Goths from the Procurator's bodyguard, gigantic men with thick yellow beards as bristly as a juniper branch in the wilderness of Sur. They wore suits of buckskin and their helmets were built up of bands of greenish bronze; they carried whips of rhinoceros hide tipped with triangular metal finials and their short swords, extremely effective for close work, were suspended from leather girdles.

Eight Numidian slaves bore the purple canopied litter. Upon its silken cushions lolled the well-nourished figure of a man, none other than Pontius Pilate himself, fifth Procurator of Judæa, Samaria, and Idumæa, and the successor of the incompetent and highly unpopular Archelaus. His usual residence was at Cæsarea on the seacoast, but he was accustomed to come to Jerusalem during the Passover week in order to quell in person any disturbance that might arise among his unruly subjects.

The Procurator clapped his hands, and the bearers placed the litter on a convenient stone bench; Pontius Pilate swung his feet to the ground and sat up. I surveyed him with lively

curiosity.

Middle-aged and inclined to portliness; dressed in a long robe of Phœnician linen; around his shoulders a short cloak of magnificent western sea-otter fastened at the throat by a turquoise set in silver; about his temples a fillet of reddish Roman

gold.

At first glance there appeared abundant evidence of commanding character in the man's face, with its broad forehead, beetling crags of eyebrows, and high-arched nose; then, as my gaze travelled downward, that strong personality fell suddenly into ruin, for the chin was insignificant and there was a puzzled weakness in the lines of the mouth and cheeks. This vicegerent of the Cæsars might sit in the seat of the mighty, chance and cunning had placed him high; but a turn of Fortune's wheel might at any moment cast him down.

The petulant gaze wandered over to where we stood. Pilate made a sign to Lucius Verus, and my friend advanced to the litter and saluted. A few words, and then Verus turned and

beckoned me to present myself; I obeyed.

"Your name and condition?" demanded the Governor. I gave the required information.

"I happened to notice you this morning. You were in company with that Galilæan agitator—I can never remember his name."

"Jesus of Nazareth."

"To be sure—Jesus. Strange that it will not stick in my memory! I have heard it a score of times, but always it escapes me when I want to make use of it. Tell me, young man, is he another of these pestilent false Messiahs?"

"I have never thought of him, Highness, in that light. Nor, from what I know of him, would he ever dream of claiming

such distinction."

"Up in Galilee I hear that much people have gone out after him. What is his business in Jerusalem?"

"I cannot tell you, Sire. I know only that he goes about

doing good."

Pilate sniffed. "Whoever heard of such a thing!" he commented disdainfully. "He is here to make trouble—that recent disorder in the Temple area, for example. I tell you I will not have it; per Hercule! I mean it. You turbulent Jews! never can I do anything to please you. First, there was objection to my moving the military headquarters from Cæsarea to the Prætorium. Then the Zealots protested against the public display of the imperial standards bearing the embroidered portrait of the god-emperor; foolishly enough, I yielded the point. Now comes this dispute about the disposition of the money from the Corban."

"The Temple treasure and therefore sacred, Highness."

Pilate swore an oath redolent of the Roman stews. "One would suppose," he complained, "that I was using it to line my own coffers, whereas every *denarius* went to the building of the much-needed aqueduct to bring water to the city from the pools of Solomon. Ingrates!"

There is no profit in arguing with a man who holds a knife

to your throat; I made no further reply.

The Procurator frowned, and an edge crept into his voice. "Harkee, young sir," he continued, "I have told you that I will have no more trouble in my province; by the three-headed dog of hell, I swear it! The ear of Rome is attentive and the arm of the divine Tiberius is long, very long. Have a care then—now and henceforth."

Pilate waved his hand to signify that the interview was at an end, and I withdrew to my former position. Presently Verus came over to me. "The Procurator is on a tour of inspection of the fortress," he whispered, "and he requires me to be in

attendance. And so the Falernian and our symposium will have to wait."

"Naturally."

"The old fox is suspicious and if you have any love for your friend Jesus——"

"We are leaving Jerusalem early to-morrow morning; on the

way back to Galilee."

"It is well. Perhaps we shall meet again shortly. For the present: *Shelom!* as you Jews put it. Peace be with you!" We shook hands after the Western manner.

"Shelom!"

Lucius Verus hurried after the litter which was being carried through the massive portal of the fortress proper, and I made my way thoughtfully to the house of Rachel. Doubtless it was just as well that our departure from the city should not be unduly delayed. And so I contrived to bring it about that we left Jerusalem that very day; we spent the night at a small village named Lebonah near the border line of Samaria, and managed an unusually early start the following morning. Towards the middle of the forenoon we had reached the valley of Nablus, the twin peaks of Gerizim and Ebal rising on either side. Gerizim, the mount of blessing, was covered with vegetation—scarlet oaks and walnut trees, mulberry figs and sycamores—nearly to the summit; Ebal, the mount of cursing, was entirely bare and seamed with countless ravines, the dry beds of ancient water-courses. The Master directed John, Philip, and James Minor to proceed onward to Sychar to purchase food, Sychar being a small village near the traditional site of Jacob's Well. Jesus signified his intention to ascend the mount of blessing for the purpose of rest and meditation; Judas and I could await his return to the valley path.

Judas appeared unusually moody and abstracted even for him; and, after staring aimlessly about for a few minutes, he crossed the narrow valley and presently was lost to sight in one of the rocky defiles leading up the flank of Mount Ebal. I

strolled in the same direction.

And then I heard it again, that nerve-shattering clamour which months before, in the wilderness of Jeshimon, had come sounding down the gloomy gorge of the Fly-god to affright my ears—the agony of a soul at grips with the powers of darkness. Without taking time to consider, I ran to the cleft in the rock wall through which Judas had disappeared, and began the ascent. The path was steep and rough, and but little breath remained in my lungs when I had breasted the last rise. Ah,

there he was, but even as I looked my racing pulses slowed, and

a chilly wind dried the sweat upon my forehead.

The summit was a small and virtually level space. At the far side a cone-shaped stone had been fixed in a vertical position; it stood waist-high, and upon its flattened top had been placed a clay figurine representing the squat, seated form of a nude woman who held a dove between her breasts. I recognized it immediately—this was the two-horned goddess Ashtoreth, the Babylonian Ishtar, the divinity presiding over the processes of reproductive life (the "increase of the flock"), and whose special season for worship was the spring time. Now Ishtar is none other than that pagan deity whom the prophet Jeremiah calls the "queen of heaven," as when he says: "Seest thou not what they do in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem? The children gather wood, and the fathers kindle the fire, and the women knead their dough, to make cakes to the queen of heaven." An ancient apostasy then, and infamously distinguished for the obscenity of its rites.

Before the altar, if such it could be called, postured Judas, his body swaying from side to side in a slow, rhythmic motion; his right hand held a bunch of poppy flowers, evidently intended as a votive offering. For a moment or so I stood immobile, uncertain as to my course of action; then I fell to wondering if any other ear than mine had listened to that infernal belling from the mountain top and had divined its significance. A slight sound struck my ear—perhaps the rattle of a misplaced stone—and I glanced over my shoulder to catch sight of a white head-dress immediately below me. Jesus was coming up the path.

I dashed forward. With a well-directed impulse from my foot, I toppled the pedestal to the ground; and in its fall the statuette was broken into unrecognizable fragments. I turned to face Judas. He was crouching for the spring, his black eyes filmed with fury and his clay-coloured lips drawn back over the bared teeth after the fashion of a beast of prey; I braced myself for the shock.

But it never came; suddenly he collapsed in a heap, flaccid as an emptied grain sack; he lay motionless except for a slight twitching of the hands. Behind him stood the Master, silent but intently watchful.

In spite of my sedentary life, my muscles are by no means contemptible, and I found no difficulty in dragging the insensible body to a little hollow close at hand filled with a mat of newly grown grass. I picked up Judas's woolen turban, and doubled it to make a pillow for his head. His outer cloak was lying on

the ground, and I spread it over him by way of covering. Jesus bent to the prostrate figure and stretched out his hand; then quickly withdrew it. The gaze of the Master swept over the scattered poppies, lying like gouts of blood upon the rocky floor, and travelled onward to the fallen pillar and the broken pieces of the clay figure. Doubtless he understood, but he made no sign and spake no word; only there was a great sadness in his eyes as again they rested upon the face of Judas.

We watched Judas for a few moments in silence. Then the Master came to a decision. I was to remain with our comrade until he had quite recovered. Jesus himself would descend the mountain, go on to the Well of Jacob, and wait there until we should rejoin him. Presently I was left alone with the still-unconscious man; so complete was the quiet that I could hear the twittering of birds in the boscage of the olive groves far

below in the valley.

Hardly an hour had passed when Judas opened his eyes, yawned, and sat up. "I must have fallen asleep," he remarked casually. He looked up at the sun. "Past the sixth hour and

I am hungry; shall we be going?"

Not the faintest indication that he recalled anything of what had happened. And unless Judas were a more accomplished dissimulator than I had ever deemed him, I must accept his attitude of candid indifference; clearly this was not the time or place in which to force the issue. Whereupon I assented and we began the descent, Judas leading the way. His step was springy and his former moodiness had dropped away as though it were a discarded cloak; he appeared to be in perfect physical well-being, confident, alert, and even cheerful. It was amazing.

Arriving at the valley, Judas decided that he would proceed at once to Sychar to rejoin our companions, and I took the left-

hand path to join Jesus.

The well lay in a little dell, partially surrounded by a wall of unhewn boulders, and shaded by an immensely old terebinth tree. As I approached, I saw Jesus seated on the curb of the well, and before him stood a Samaritan woman, middle-aged but still attractive, after a coarse fashion, in form and feature. The two were in earnest converse and so I halted at some paces away. But presently the Master raised his voice and I heard him say: "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

"Sir, give me this water," answered the woman, "that I

thirst not, neither come hither to draw."

Again the words became inaudible. Jesus seemed to be questioning the woman; she flushed and hung her head. Then her manner changed and she burst forth excitedly: "I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things."

Jesus said: "I that speak unto thee am he."

The woman looked at him with startled eyes; suddenly she turned and ran up the path leading to the village, forgetful in her haste of the waterpot which she had come to fill. Jesus rose and joined me, and, to my surprise, John also; he had been sitting quietly at the base of the big tree and I had not observed his presence.

We followed the woman at a more moderate pace. The Master vouchsafed no comments on the incident. John, the Beloved Disciple, has recorded the story in full, in the Fourth

Gospel.

The tiny market-place of Sychar was filled with townspeople listening to the woman; again and again she kept repeating: "A man which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?" The eyes of all rested upon Jesus as he passed through the group and disappeared beneath the arcade of the modest

Greatly to our surprise, the Master, at the midday meal, announced his intention of remaining at Sychar for several hours. Whereupon my companions looked uncomfortable, since, being orthodox Jews, it was against their religious principles to have any social intercourse with the Samaritans. As a citizen of the world, I held myself superior to such vulgar prejudice, although there could be little in common between me and these simple folk.

However, I was uneasy on another score. Jesus re-entered the market-square, and I noticed him talking to the men and

women who thronged about him.

"You hear what they are saying," whispered Philip to me as we hovered in the background. A confused babel of words, and then distinctly: "Now we believe * * * we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world."

"Can they mean the Messiah?" queried Philip.

I nodded anxiously. "Without a doubt," I replied. "I myself heard the Master answering the woman, saying: 'I that speak unto thee am he.'" My mind went back to Pilate's inquiry about Jesus as a possible false Messias, and how I had repelled the insinuation, even vehemently. What was I now

to think? And truly the situation presented itself as fraught with dangerous implications.

The night was balmy,* and we made excellent progress, walking at a good pace on a comparatively smooth road that ran between luxuriant hedges of oleanders now in gorgeous bloom. When dawn came we were well on our way: we broke our fast at the Well of Harod some distance beyond the border line. And there, to our astonishment, Simon Peter met us. It was bad news that he brought. John the Baptist had been taken by Herod Antipas, and was now imprisoned in the fortress of Machærus, inaccessibly situated in the wilderness east of the sea that is salt and dead.

Should we ever see him again, that prophet who was more than a prophet and whose winged words had so profoundly moved the men of our day and generation? The prospect looked dark, for behind John's incarceration lurked the venom of a wicked woman. When Herod married Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, the Baptist had denounced the adulterous union. And Herodias had not forgotten; never would forgive. Therefore our hearts were heavy as we journeyed; only the brow of the Master remained untroubled and serene. At that I wondered until I remembered something he had said at Sychar when Philip besought him to take food: "I have meat to eat that ye know not of." A hard saying it had seemed to me at the time. But might it not be the answer—perhaps the only answer—to many a hard question?

^{*} John says in his Gospel that Jesus abode in Sychar for two whole days, but our loose Jewish custom in the calculation of elapsed time should be borne in mind. As a matter of fact, we left the village shortly after midnight to retake the north road into Galilee, preferring the cool of a night journey to the dust and glare of a daylight march. But since our stay at Sychar embraced, in part, a double four-and-twenty hour period it would be accounted, in colloquial speech, as covering two days.

VII

SPRINGTIME IN GALILEE

ALILEE in the month of Nisan, the springtime of the Master's ministry. It was the season of the second ploughing, and on every side one observed the sights and sounds of cheerful industry. Slow oxen, their sharp-pointed horns tipped with vermillion, drew the cumbrous wooden ploughs, and a multitude of birds-starlings, blue thrushes, crows, and chaffinches—followed the course of the husbandmen, seeking for grubs and earthworms; they pecked eagerly at the shallow furrows of rich, chocolate-coloured soil upturned by the share, and chattered incessantly. The sun shone warmly overhead, and, in the high blue, companies of swifts and larks wheeled and darted, mocking the slower flight of the black and white storks with their wide-beating wings and clattering beaks. Commerce, too, was enjoying its annual revival, and the highway was thronged with troops of burden-bearing animals strong, dark mules, their harness garnished with musically tinkling bells; moth-eaten camels, their yellow teeth invariably bared in a satiric grin; whilst the drivers, urging on their plodding beasts, filled the air with hoarse shouts and the cracking of whips; everywhere the joyful animation of the new and springing year.

Arriving at my own town of Cana, our little company divided, John, Philip, and James Minor continuing onward to Capernaum; whilst I took Jesus and Judas Iscariot to lodge with me overnight. The news of our return from Jerusalem must have been noised abroad, for, as we approached my mother's house, a horseman came galloping up the steep road from the lake, and checked his foam-flecked steed at our gate. I recognized him as Zophar, a wealthy resident of Capernaum and a high

officer in King Herod's court.

Zophar, his face white and drawn, slipped from his saddle and excitedly accosted the Master; he asked that Jesus should hasten to Capernaum to heal his son, the boy being even now at the point of death.

"Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe," replied

Jesus; plainly the Master hesitated between his ever-ready sense of sympathy and his unwillingness to be accounted a mere worker of wonders.

But Zophar was in no mood for such subtleties. "Sir," he burst forth, "come down, ere my child die."

"Go thy way; thy son liveth," said Jesus; turning abruptly he entered the house.

So there was to be neither sign nor wonder. For a moment or two Zophar stared after the receding form of the Master, profoundly bewildered, bitterly disappointed. Then his face cleared, a new and confident light brightened his eyes, and he clutched at his horse's bridle. But the beast had gone dead lame, and unfortunately I had no riding animal to place at Zophar's disposal. Zophar intimated his intention of returning afoot, but already it was long past the seventh hour after midday and a violent wind-storm had come up, accompanied by a downpour of rain that rendered the precipitous road certainly dangerous and probably impassable. The best I could do for Zophar was to offer him a rug and a couple of mats; accordingly he resigned himself to the inevitable delay. When I came downstairs at dawn, Zophar had already started upon his homeward journey. To my surprise, Judas also had disappeared, and I guessed that he had followed Zophar for some purpose of his

By the middle of the afternoon Ish-Kerioth had returned; he was smiling mysteriously. He told me that Zophar's steward and several of his other servants had met him at the halfway point, bearing the welcome intelligence that the boy was well on the road to recovery. When Zophar asked when the child had begun to mend, they answered that the fever had left him at the seventh hour. "Yesterday at the seventh hour," repeated Judas exultantly. "The same hour in which Jesus said unto him, 'Thy son liveth.'"

The Iscariot laughed in manifest enjoyment at my perplexity. "Observe, my good Bar-Talmai," he continued, "that here is the second miracle wrought by Jesus in this same Cana of Galilee. Are you still doubtful of our friend's power to do mighty works? Zophar and all his household are now believers, and the time will surely come when you too will be numbered among the witnesses; yes, you so wise in your own conceit; so puffed up with your foreign learning."

Judas strode away very well satisfied with himself and I indeed found food for reflection. Was Jesus above Nature and did he do the curing contrary to what I had learned at Alexandria, in the applied science of medicine, that always it is Nature herself who is the great healer? I must reserve judgment.

On the last day of the week Jesus and I had walked over to Nazareth, as the Master wished to attend the Sabbath service in the synagogue of his youthful days. Early on the following morning we presented ourselves at the door of the sacred building where we were greeted by the chief ruler of the congregation; somewhat to my surprise, he invited Jesus to take an important part in the ceremony, the reading of the lesson from the Prophets. However, the Master's fame as a teacher was already current in the village of his boyhood, and the chief ruler was but following the usual custom of honouring the presence of a distinguished

visitor. Jesus signified his assent, and we entered.

The synagogue at Nazareth, although small and severely plain in its decorations and furnishings, embodied the traditional features in its architecture and interior arrangements. At the south end was an alcove (midrab) which could be shut off by a curtain. In this recess stood the Ark, or chest, containing the rolls of the Law, the Prophets, and the other sacred writings; before it burned the Holy Lamp in commemoration of the Undying Light of the Temple. In front of the Ark were the special seats reserved for the ruler, the minor officials, and the chief men of the congregation. In the centre of the edifice stood the bima, or raised platform, on which was placed the lectern for the accommodation of the several readers; and at the north end was the gallery for women, access being provided by an outside staircase.

The building was thronged with worshippers on this memorable Sabbath morning, and our entrance was marked by a rustle of attention and many curious glances. In one of the chief places sat a man whose close-set eyes fixed themselves in a semi-puzzled, semi-angry stare upon Jesus. I knew him to be Joseph's eldest son; for now that Peter's shipbuilding yard at Capernaum had closed for the season, James had returned to his carpentry business at Nazareth. Also in the congregation I noticed one of the younger brothers, Thaddæus by name, but more commonly called Jude.

It was customary that the person appointed to read the portion from the Prophets should also conduct the preliminary liturgical devotions. Accordingly the Master took his appointed place, beginning the ritual with the two traditional introductory prayers, and then leading the people in the *Shema*, or Jewish creed. How familiar was the majestic exhortation: "Hear, O

Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord. And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children * * * and thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates." Familiar words indeed to every Jewish ear; and yet, falling from his lips, they seemed to take

on a new and deeper meaning.

Standing before the Ark, Jesus pronounced the eulogies, or benedictions, in which the congregation joined silently except for the closing Amen; then he took his seat, and the service proceeded with the lessons from the Law, the seven canonical readers receiving in turn the roll taken from the Ark by the chazzan, or deacon, and each reverently kissing the sacred text before ascending the bima to deliver his allotted portion. The last of these officials was Jude, slightly built and with a brown beard whose lustrous, silky texture proclaimed that he had attained to manhood's estate within a comparatively brief time; indeed Jude was the senior of Jesus by only a couple of years. Now again came the Master's turn, the reading from the Prophets.

The chazzan selected a roll from the Ark, removed the protecting case of leather, unwound the linen cloth in which the manuscript was wrapped, and handed it to Jesus. It was the book of the prophet Esaias, or Isaiah. With a swift appraising glance, the Master turned to the latter half of the roll, and began the reading. Since in our day few among the worshippers understood the ancient Hebrew, it was customary for the reader to pause at the conclusion of every three verses while the interpreter made an extemporaneous translation into the colloquial Aramaic. But the Master dispensed with the services of the methurgeman, making his own version into the vernacular, or everyday lan-

guage. And this is what he read:

"The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering the sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised,

to preach the acceptable year of the Lord."

Closing the book, he gave it again to the *chazzan* and sat down. A tremor ran through the assembly, and I caught the whisper: "Is not this Joseph's son?" Jesus heard it too, but he only answered: "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears."

Every eye seemed to rest in hungry eagerness upon the serene countenance of the Master. What was the power in these simple words, so different from the wooden expositions of the ordinary rabbi or teacher, to shake a man's very soul, to move him in

his inmost being?

But the reaction came quickly. Hardly had the final benediction been pronounced than the murmur of comment again swelled forth, and now there was a distinctly hostile tone in its burden. The face of Elder Brother James grew red with anger as he whispered excitedly to the chief ruler. Somewhere from the depths of the assembly a sarcastic voice was uplifted in the proverbial expression: "Physician, heal thyself." Men sprang to their feet; several tried to speak at the same time; their confused utterances clashed violently.

The Master sat in silence, but there was a great sadness in his eyes as he listened to the uproar. "What have you to answer?"

demanded the chief ruler.

Jesus rose to his feet. "No prophet," he retorted, "is accepted in his own country." He went on to recall the contempt and contumely to which the prophets Elijah and Elisha had been subjected by their own people; alas, for the hardness of men's hearts!

The tumult increased. Suddenly a wave of angry, gesticulating humanity seemed to envelop us; borne on its crest, the Master and I found ourselves in the open, being hurried along the narrow street to the outskirts of the village. Curses sounded in our ears. I kept close to Jesus' side, whilst Jude brought up the rear and prevented the crowd from jostling us too roughly.

Now we were on the road that skirts the brow of the hill on which Nazareth is built. At one point the descent to the plain is precipitous, and a fall to the jagged rocks below would mean serious injury—perhaps death. Moreover, the temper of the crowd continued ugly; and in the pushing and jostling what would afterwards pass as an accident might easily happen.

It was the critical moment. The mob, now strangely silent, was massed along the highway at the dangerous angle. Without either slowing or accelerating his pace, the Master walked on between the lines of angry men. There were scowling faces and clenched fists a-plenty, but not a hand was raised against his person, and presently we had won clear with the road to Capernaum running safe and empty before us. Jesus had indeed been rejected and cast out by his own people, but his blood would not be upon their heads, and he was still free to carry on his glorious mission to the scattered sheep of the fold of Israel.

From behind came a gasp, and we looked back upon Jude who stood there with tears raining down his face. Jesus stopped, and his own eyes were wet as he took Jude in his arms and kissed him on the brow. Then we parted in silence, Jude returning to the village, whilst the Master and I resumed our homeward course to Cana and Capernaum.

Back again in Capernaum, which is on the seacoast between the borders of Zebulon and Nepthalim, that so the prophecy of Esaias might be fulfilled: "The people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them that sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up." And here the Master abode for many days, teaching betimes in the synagogue, and again while sitting in the market-place, or walking along the flowery lanes and byways of green and pleasant Galilee. Always he preached the imminence of the kingdom of God, retelling again and again the little stories, or parables, by which he sought to make manifest the nature and operation of that blessed sovereignty when again righteousness and peace shall cover the earth as the waters cover the seas: stressing in particular the secret working of that irresistible puissance, "like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened." How heart-searching the warning: "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation; neither shall they say, Lo here! or Lo there! for behold "-this of all his pronouncements the most incredible —" for behold, the kingdom of God is within you." What else could he mean but that this power must first be established in the hearts of men-poor, weak, foolish, wicked men-before it could avail to transform a ruined world? A hard doctrine, but the people came in increasing numbers to hang upon his words; and of those who heard him gladly many elected to become his disciples; among the latter Joanna, the wife of Chuzas; and Lilli. Strange! for I had not thought that a young woman of Lilli's birth and breeding would have been attracted by the ethical philosophy of a plain, Galilæan peasant such as Jesus of Nazareth. But then I might have said the same thing about myself; how could his teaching appeal to me, Nathanael of Cana, with my intensive Gentile training and aloof, sceptical temperament? I might not be able to agree with all he said, but such was the spell of his radiant personality that something of spiritual worth possessed and remained with me. It seems unbelievable, but it was Philip-the light-minded, pleasure-loving Philip-who came the nearest to plucking the heart out of the mystery; it was he who summed up the matter in a single sentence to be afterwards recorded by the Evangelist Luke: "His word was with power."

It was a pleasant morning in the month Sivan, and Jesus and I walked on the shelving shingle of the seashore at Bethsaida, a fishing village situated a little south of Capernaum. Here the water from seven warm springs gushes into the miniature bay, and the ripples were shot with silver flashes from the scales of myriad fishes darting to and fro in the shallows. Simon Peter, his robe tucked up, stood thigh deep in the water and swung a throw-net above his head. This throw-net was circular in shape, and to its lower edge was attached a series of leaden weights. In the first instance the apparatus was closed, but as Peter made the cast the whirling motion caused the leads to spread apart; the open net falling into the water and sinking to the bottom. pull on a draw-cord transformed the netted tent into a sack, enclosing securely the fish within its circuit; then all was hauled ashore. Peter was skilful in the manipulation of the throw-net; but neither he nor his brother Andrew had caught anything.

Jesus had watched the busy scene with a smile; now he called to Peter: "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men."

Peter and Andrew turned and recognized Jesus; their faces lit up with pleasure at the unexpected meeting; they threw down

their nets and joined him.

As usual, a good-sized crowd had assembled, attracted by the appearance of the Master. Jesus stepped into Peter's boat, and desired him to put out a little from the land; sitting in the stern-sheets, he began to teach the people, employing his favourite device of the parable. And this is what he told them, as recorded in the Gospel according to Matthew:

"The kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered the good into vessels, and cast the bad away. So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just. * * * For many be called, but few chosen." He turned to Simon Peter. "Launch out into the deep," he commanded, "and let down

your nets for a draught."

Peter hesitated, explaining that he and Andrew had toiled all the night with the large draw-net, but without success. "Nevertheless," he continued, "at thy word I will let down the net." And immediately it enclosed a multitude of fishes; so great was the weight that the cords of the net began to give way, and there was danger lest the captives might escape. Whereupon Peter called to his partners, James and John, to come and help. They

quickly responded, and soon both ships were loaded so deeply that the water poured over the gunwales and they began to sink. All were astonished, but with Simon Peter fear overmastered amazement; what manner of man was this who could work wonders with a single word! Impulsive as ever, Peter fell down at the Master's knees, crying out: "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord." But Jesus was quick to reassure him. "Fear not," he said, "from henceforth thou shalt catch men." Peter arose and heartened by that all-comprehending look, he gave back the Master's smile; then bending his back to the oars he brought the heavily laden boat to the beach.

On the bank stood a man whose countenance plainly expressed the doubt which possessed him; could he believe the marvel that his eyes had just beheld? "Thomas, called Didymus," whispered Andrew in my ear. "He is a factor from Tiberias who deals in dried and salted fish for exportation to the western mar-

kets; generally he takes over our entire catch."

Thomas was a stoutish man of some five-and-forty years with a face that looked as though it had been carved out of walnut wood. His high, dome-like head was almost completely bald, and his dark beard was thickly shot with silver. Still incredulous, he leaned over and picked up one of the fish which Peter was tossing ashore; he weighed it in his hand and ran an appraising eye over its plump contours. Why yes, it was an actual fish and in prime condition! The network of fine wrinkles in Thomas's forehead vanished in a friendly grimace. "I'll take the lot," he declared, "and at the top price."

But the bargaining was never completed. "Come ye after me," repeated Jesus, "and I will make you to become fishers of men." He looked hard at the two pairs of brothers; then his glance travelled onward to Thomas, the doubter, and included him in the circle of chosen ones. Nor did any refuse the invitation from the Master; as Luke tells us: "When they had brought

their ships to land, they forsook all, and followed him."

And so definitely began that career of discipleship which was to endure as long as life itself for all but one of us. Naming them in turn, our company now included: Simon Peter and his brother Andrew; James and John, the sons of Zebedee; James the Less, Thomas, Philip, Judas Iscariot, and myself—nine in all. Morever, when we reached Capernaum on our homeward way two new recruits were added unexpectedly to the roster. Waiting at the city gate stood Jude. The Young Jude, as I always thought of him—not so much in the matter of actual years, but as compared to the chill austerity of Elder Brother

James—yes, Jude who alone among the Master's own family ever seemed to believe in him and in his mission. Even Mary, the mother, had been troubled in mind; and, at times, had sought to remonstrate with Jesus upon his incomprehensible course; whilst Joses, Simon, and the two sisters had shown themselves uncompromisingly hostile. Yet not only had Jude refrained from joining in the unfriendly demonstration at the Nazareth synagogue, but he had done his best to protect the Master from the wrath of the mob. Now he had come to ally himself formally with Jesus, and I could see that the Master was well pleased. No words were necessary between them; another friendly embrace, and Jude (sometimes called Thaddæus) became numbered in the Glorious Company of the Apostles. Many years later he was to write one of the Epistles General of the New Testament canon, and to remain Christ's faithful soldier and servant unto his life's end. But I like best to remember him as I saw him on that summer day at Capernaum, active of step and vibrant with the joy of perfect manhood; slow indeed of speech, but bringing the full measure of his youthful strength and enthusiasm—himself and all that he had—to lay at the Master's feet. The "Young Jude"!

Shortly after we entered Capernaum, Philip met us. He was accompanied by an old acquaintance whom he had run across in Japhia. Simon Zelotes, or the Cananæan, was an undersized, wasp-like figure of a man, with the most sunburnt skin that ever I beheld, apart from the indurated tan of a Moabitish shepherd; also he had a deeply cleft chin, bushy eyebrows, and a truculent mouth. As his name indicated, he was a member of the fiercely nationalistic party known as the Zealots, whose one political tenet was the expulsion from the sacred soil of Israel of the foreign invader; in this instance, the imperial Roman power. That Simon was a member of some secret order among the Zealots was shown by his wearing a band of coarse red cloth around his left arm. And if further evidence were required he supplied it within a few moments after our meeting. Stooping to pick up some trifle, an object fell from the bosom of his camel's-hair tunic which struck with a metallic jingle on the pavement and lay at my feet. I retrieved and handed it back, noticing that it was the peculiarly curved knife called sicca, its razor-like edge protected by a leather sheath. Within a few years the bearers of the sicca became known as the Sicarii, and they quickly degenerated into a band of ferocious assassins whose murderous activities had to be curbed by the strong arm of the Roman military.

What such a fanatic could find in common with Jesus of Nazareth it is difficult to conjecture. Even more incomprehensible is what the Master discerned in the forbidding countenance of Simon that led him to attach the Zealot to his person. But, as always, Jesus saw differently than the common eye; this was his man and he took him. The call was obeyed as instantaneously as it had been given; the Cananæan forthwith became the

eleventh member of our group.

One place, the twelfth, remained unfilled. Now I had noticed that whenever the Master walked through the market-place of Capernaum, Matthew-Levi was sure to be standing on the doorstep of his little tax office in the Roman customs; and there he invariably remained until Jesus had passed out of sight. No word was ever exchanged between them, but always in Matthew's eye there was the look of a dog of the Occident who disappointedly watches his master's departure—the longing for an invitation to accompany the object of his devotion, the mute resignation until the next occasion should offer. Doubtless the Master had a purpose to accomplish in thus deferring the calling of Matthew, and in his own good time he would reveal it. Perhaps he was trying out the man's soul, fitting and shaping Matthew's nature, through the process of a patient probation, until it should grow into an instrument perfectly adapted to the Master's hand, meet for his service. Thomas, Jude, and Simon Zelotes had been accepted instantly upon their appearance, while Matthew had to wait. How strange! but for the certainty that this man whom we call the Master doeth all things well.

VIII

THE LEPER IS CLEANSED

S I have already noted, Jesus was not subject to our ordinary human infirmities; he might be weary or hungry, but never was he sick. Moreover, the mere sight of his own radiant health, the slightest touch of his warm hand, were sufficient to fill the sufferer with that spirit of joyful assurance which is ever the prelude to a normal condition of well-being. More than once, in my own experience, I had witnessed a like phenomenon. I might be feeling really ill, but in the presence of Jesus I instantly became conscious of the returning tide of health and strength. Some mysterious transference of power; is that the answer? Or are we to accept the prophetic words of Esaias: "Himself took our infirmities, bare our sicknesses"? Still more perplexing, since no outward appearance of maladjustment was ever to be observed in the person of Jesus.

Again it was the Sabbath, and the Master, following his invariable custom, prepared to attend the services in the synagogue. Now the synagogue at Capernaum was perhaps the largest and most ornate structure of its kind in the country. It had been a gift to the community from Varro, a wealthy and retired officer of the Roman military, who was now a resident of Capernaum. While not a convert to Judaism, Varro was a friend of our people; and, by way of expressing his good-will, he had caused this synagogue to be erected and furnished at his individual expense.

It was indeed a striking edifice. Built of white limestone freshly hewn from the quarries of Wady Haman, it presented the appearance of marble, while the roof was covered with handsome Roman tiling. It was of sufficient size to accommodate three or four hundred people, and in its proportions the universal rule for Latin basilicas had been followed (the width being three-quarters of the length). There was a noble portico facing almost due south, or towards the lake; and under it opened the three portals, a central doorway flanked by two subsidiary posterns. As I have previously noted, the lintel over the principal entrance bore the sculptured representation of a pot of manna instead of the more usual seven-branched candlestick.

Inside, the decorative features were extraordinarily rich. Great pillars, crowned with Corinthian capitals of the acanthus leaf pattern, formed the two aisles of the nave; and, at the north end, there was another row of columns, towering above the seats of the chief ruler and elders, and supporting the women's gallery. The friezes and entablatures were of exquisite workmanship, whilst over the windows were carvings portraying the conventional five-angled design known as Solomon's Seal and the two interlaced triangles which form the six-pointed star of David; also replicas of candlesticks, censers, trumpets, bunches of grapes, and olive branches. But mingled with these familiar and orthodox symbols were a number of frankly Gentile devices sculptured in low relief-griffins and lions, eagles (the pagan emblem of immortality), a grotesque creature with a horse's head and a fish's tail, conch shells, laurel victory wreaths, and even a miniature temple on wheels, and triumphal cars such as those used for the goddess Diana at Ephesus and for the sun-god at Heli-The more straightly-laced of our co-religionists Jerusalem would have held up their hands in horror at these unorthodox ornaments in a Jewish synagogue, but here in Galilee people were more liberal in their views and practices. Our fine house of worship had been a present from a generous Roman patron; what did these small irregularities matter?

Jesus led the way into the dimly lighted interior and we, his disciples, followed; that is, all but Judas Iscariot who was absent

in Tiberias.

It was a sultry day, but the atmosphere was cool and aromatic from the bunches of freshly cut mint strewn upon the marble floor, and which gave off a renewed fragrance with the passage of every bared foot. It was close to the hour of service and the building was well filled with worshippers; they sat, of course, on mats, with the exception of the officials and distinguished members of the congregation who occupied the ceremonial benches at the north end. Conspicuous among these latter was Hananiah Ben-Hamel whose fanaticism had occasioned the outbreak on our first visit to Capernaum. Alongside of him sat a scribe named Joel, according to Philip, who knows everything and everybody. An unpleasant looking person this Joel—so hairless of poll and cheek that he suggested an obscene sea-slug, little pig eyes, a pasty complexion, and his thick lips twisted up into a perpetual sneer.

Something drew my attention to the women's gallery. In the front row I recognized Lilli looking remarkably fresh and attractive. But who was the handsome, middle-aged woman in

Roman dress, elaborately coiffed, and wearing a necklace of dazzling white pearls? "Claudia Procula, the wife of the Procurator," prompted Philip. A nobly appearing woman of patrician bearing and highly intelligent face; I observed with interest that she and Lilli seemed to be on very familiar and friendly terms. Back of them I caught a glimpse of Joanna sit-

ting far back in the shadows.

The chief ruler, perhaps mindful of the recent fracas at Nazareth, had not asked Jesus to take part in the liturgy. But now that the formal services had been concluded, the head of the congregation glanced over at the Master, and there was an evident invitation in the action; this young rabbi, already famous throughout Galilee, had he no word to-day for the people, most of whom had come to the synagogue expressly to hear him? Jesus understood and rose to his feet: he stood looking over the closely packed mass of interested faces before he began to speak.

A word here upon the Master's speaking voice. It had a marvellous range: from the deep notes that suggested a great bell, up through the silver trumpets of the middle register to the purely white tones of a reed flute. Such were its cadence and quality that I fancy a stranger might listen attentively to that wonderful organ even though unable to understand the language

which it spoke; it was music in itself.

"A sower," he began, "went out to sow his seed."

I pricked up my ears. This was one of the little informal stories which Jesus had related during our earlier sojourn at Ca-

pernaum, a parable hard to understand.

A hush fell upon the congregation, for we of the Orient are ever ready to lend attention to a story. Every eye was fixed on him, and I noticed that the Lady Claudia was leaning far over the rail of the women's gallery, intent upon every syllable.

"A sower went out to sow his seed," repeated the Master, "and as he sowed, some fell by the wayside; and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it." Jesus turned and looked straight at Hananiah and his companion Joel, and at the other members of the Pharisaic party who lolled comfortably in the chief seats of the synagogue. "Those by the wayside," he said, "are they that hear; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the seed out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be

Hananiah's bulky figure stiffened in angry surprise; this to him, a ruler of the Jews and a leading light among the Pharisees! He tried to stare back at this presumptuous young teacher, but presently his own eyes fell; he shrugged his shoulders. The

others, among them several learned doctors of the Law, affected an indifference which they were evidently far from feeling;

Joel alone appeared unmoved.

Jesus again addressed himself directly to the congregation. "And some," he said, "fell upon a rock; and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it lacked moisture." I followed his gaze and saw that it rested upon two of his former disciples—Obed and Lemuel by name—who had enthusiastically acclaimed the Master after the miracle at the marriage feast of Cana, but who had fallen away at the first sign of opposition to his mission, and walked no more with him.

"They on the rock," expounded the Master, "are they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away." A deep red flushed the countenance of Obed, while Lemuel sought to shelter himself behind the form of his nearest neighbour. An utter silence pervaded the assembly.

Once more Jesus took up his parable:

"And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprang up with it, and choked it. And that which fell among thorns are they, which when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection." Again silence, but now it was broken by a long-drawnout sigh, and the Lady Claudia sank back behind the protecting bulwark of the gallery, while Lilli's ardent face alternately glowed and paled. But still Jesus went on speaking:

"And other fell on good ground, and sprang up, and bare fruit an hundredfold." The Master's glance travelled to where Joanna sat, and then returned to sweep the semicircle of his own disciples and met the eager eyes of James Minor. "But they," he continued (and there was a smile in his voice), "on the good ground are they which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience."

Never shall I forget the joy in the worn face of Joanna as she realized that Jesus had spoken directly to her, while James Minor, so unexpectedly singled out to receive the Master's word of commendation, trembled with emotion. Ah, these two broken vessels, so emptied of all that life has to offer, so poor in spirit, and yet so blessed since "theirs is the kingdom of heaven"! And I could find it in my heart to envy them their benediction from the lips of him to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid.

"He that hath ears to hear," concluded the Master, "let him

hear."

But there is still more to be recorded concerning the events of that memorable day. The fame of the Master had speedily gone abroad, and when the Sabbath had ended—or as Mark puts it: "At even when the sun did set—they brought unto him all that were diseased, and them that were possessed with devils. * * * And he laid his hands on every one of them, and healed them."

It was the second day after the Sabbath, and Jesus had asked us to accompany him on a short journey along the lake shore in the general direction of Magdala. Here the terrain is rugged, and the cliffs are honeycombed with caves and dens in the rocks, the chosen haunts of wild beasts and of even wilder men—outcasts whom contagious disease or their own crimes have separated from the communion of their kind.

At noon we halted for the midday meal. An hour or more later, I grew weary of inaction and strolled on alone. A turn in the path and I caught sight of an isolated house, a small structure built of mortared stone and very much out of repair; near it stood a group of men equipped with pickaxes and crowbars.

I walked to the door of the hut and was met at the threshold by a priest dressed in his ritual vestments. "It is not lawful," he said and barred my further approach. "Having fulfilled the prescribed period of seven days, I have just pronounced the

house unclean, and it will be torn down."

"The Levitical code?" I asked. He nodded and pointed to a portion of the inside wall where reddish and greenish streaks were plainly visible in the plastering. "It is a fretting leprosy," he declared. He beckoned to the workmen who came forward; he ordered them to begin the task of demolition. The picks swung up and descended with a splintering crash.

There was a lamentable cry and I looked to see a man standing on a clay terrace which overhung the doomed dwelling. A leper, doubtless, since his head was bare and his garments rent, while a cloth covered his upper lip and face, leaving visible only

a pair of deep-set eyes. Again, that lamentable cry.

"The creature's only refuge from the elements, the scorn of his fellow-men, and the wrath of Yahveh," continued the priest, a note of sympathy in his voice. "But I have no choice in the matter; it is a fretting leprosy, and the plague spot must be destroyed." A white cloud of dust arose as again the tools hit into the wall.

Suddenly the man turned and ran blindly down the path by which I had come upon the scene; I followed discreetly.

Flitting wraithlike through the acacia and juniper bushes which grew at a higher level along the trail, I caught sight of a feminine form garbed in a grey linen that melted almost imperceptibly into the environment; a gauzy wimple masked her head and features.

Around a turn in the road came my fellow-disciples with Jesus in the lead. The wretch must have recognized the Master, for he continued to run towards him, halting only when he had reached the legal limit of approach (four cubits). Jesus, too, had stopped, and now stood steadfastly regarding the miserable man.

The leper fell on his knees, crying out: "Lord, if thou wilt; Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean."

Here was an appeal to the Master's compassion, an appeal never to go unheeded. Immediately Jesus put forth his hand and touched that dreadful creature—a man "full of leprosy," as Luke puts it—saying: "I will: be thou clean." Then the Master turned to support the body of James Minor, which had fallen heavily against him.

"It is Reuel, the son of James Minor," whispered Philip.

"But look! look!"

With a quick movement Reuel tore away the masking cloth, and I saw his face plain in the brilliant sunshine. A face worn and furrowed indeed from the long days of mental anguish, but here were none of the marks of the dread disease; no whiteness of eyebrows and eyelashes, no tumescent and reddish spots on the skin; yes, there was no taint of plague in that newly transfigured countenance. A miracle!

Again Jesus was speaking, commanding Reuel to show himself to the priest and offer the ritual gift for his cleansing, charging him to tell no man of the mercy vouchsafed to him. But Reuel, rising to unsteady feet, could have heard no word of the admonition; he gasped and gazed about him, his eyeballs rolling

wildly.

A swift rush and the woman of the grey wimple was in his arms, her lips upon his. There were tears and smiles mingling, incoherent murmurings of endearment and rejoicing. Then Ruth—for, of course, it was the same woman whom I had once seen on the seashore engaged in the hard toil of net mending in order that she might earn bread to sustain her affianced lover's miserable life—took Reuel's hand in her own, and led him away on the returning path to where the priest would still be in waiting. No word of gratitude to him whose word of power had wrought this wonder; nothing save one heartful, backward

glance from the woman's swimming eyes. But I think the Master understood. As always.

Jesus turned to resume the journey southward. James Minor stumbled, and the Master, taking the old man's arm, drew him

closely to his side.

As I walked along I caught fragments of low but heated converse between Judas Iscariot and Thomas. "A man full of leprosy!" asserted the Iscariot. "Was ever such a wonder in all Israel!"

But Thomas, true to his cautious nature, demurred. "The plague, I grant you, was upon him," he said stubbornly. "But is he really cleansed? Only the priest can deliver judgment; we must wait for that."

Judas glared at the doubter, but contented himself with an expressive shrug of the shoulders. And shortly afterwards the Iscariot was missing from our company, slipping away in his cus-

tomary stealthy fashion.

Now we had debouched from the rocky mountain path into the broad highway that connects Tiberias with Magdala. On either side of the road stretched green pastures interspersed with wide and fertile fields in which the harvest was being gathered a smiling countryside. And, as he walked, the Master taught us, drawing his illustrations from the familiar scenes before our eyes. Here was a flock of sheep feeding contentedly on the sweet herbage, the shepherd standing crook in hand upon a little knoll, and keeping a watchful eye lest any should stray. "What think ye?" commented Jesus. "If a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray? And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth more of that sheep, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray." His glance swept back to that wilderness in whose fastnesses the leper Reuel had wandered, helpless and despairing. "For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost," the Master ended gently as he placed his arm about the shaking shoulders of Reuel's father, James Minor. And my own eyes were wet as I listened.

Ah, what a penetrating power the Master possessed in compelling men to think, in forcing them to seek for the hidden springs of life and conduct! I glanced at my fellow-disciples—single-hearted, loyal men; human indeed in their weaknesses, but sound at the core in their devotion to his service. Perhaps there is one exception—Judas Iscariot. Perhaps one other—myself. My sole qualification for discipleship—that having seen, I loved

Jesus and so I remain in his company. Ah, but is this enough? I can only wait to know.

Rounding a turn in the road, Tiberias, Herod's new capital, lay before our eyes; it was built on a peninsula that jutted into the Sea of Galilee. An enchanting little city, beautiful to look upon with its houses of white marble and the dazzling golden roof of Herod's palace; the green of date palms, the crimson splashes of oleanders and poppies; terraced vineyards rising back of the residential quarter, together with orchards of apples and pomegranates; truly a veritable fairyland in its outward aspect. But no pious Jew would ever set foot in this garden of delights, for Tiberias had been built upon the site of the ancient cemetery of Hammath, and underneath all this loveliness festered the pollution of dead men's bones. So far as I can remember, the Master had never entered Tiberias, nor did he propose to do so on this occasion. In the little bay at our feet lay Peter's new boat; he had ordered one of his young men to bring the ship down from Capernaum to await our arrival, and it would now convey us home.

We rose to embark, but the approach of a gay cavalcade arrested us, a company of Roman youth returning from a visit to Sepphoris, the old capital, and intent upon a night of pleasure in the gilded bordels of Tiberias; the horsemen halted suddenly.

In the front rank rode a cavalier whose face seemed oddly familiar; where had I seen that petulant, glowing countenance? Then I realized what had happened. The jolting motion had caused a mass of glorious blue-black hair to escape from the turban of gold thread decked with pearls; the unruly locks rioted upon the rider's shoulders, and fell down even to the saddle-cloth of embroidered scarlet. Dressed in masculine clothes and riding astride, this was no man; actually a young woman! I recognized her as the wayward daughter of James Minor—the famous, or rather infamous, Mary of Magdala whom men called the Magdalene. Laughing, she strove to adjust her disordered coiffure, and mocked at the clumsy male fingers which would assist her in the task. I could not have borne to look at James Minor; then I observed that he was hiding his shame-stricken face behind the protecting figure of Jesus.

Mary looked up and saw us; she recognized the Master. "Ah, the young teacher from Capernaum!" she exclaimed. "The purveyor of that miraculous bread of which if a man eat he shall live forever! But to-day, good Master, I am no customer of yours. Yonder in Tiberias my dear friend Lentulus is giving a

banquet to celebrate my name-day—pigeons stuffed with pistachio nuts, a ragout of young lamb stewed in the wine of Cyprus, pastries of larks' tongues, confections of candied figs and sugared mallows—a feast worthy of the gods. But we must hurry on lest the ovens cool and the red wine becomes flat and tasteless in the silver flagons. And so, Rabbi, your plain, wholesome provender must wait until I am truly an-hungered. Another day-perhaps."

Abandoning the attempt to arrange her scattered tresses, the woman who was a sinner wheeled her horse and drove the spurs home. The spirited animal endeavoured to leap the runlet which crossed the road at this point, but fell short, its hooves sending a cataract of muddy water in all directions but particularly upon our immediate group. Shouting and jostling, Mary's companions followed suit, and again we were deluged by a filthy flood; the cavalcade thundered along the road to Tiberias and

disappeared.

We must have presented a sorry sight, our robes stained, our head-dresses soiled, even our faces disfigured with the noisome particles of liquid mire. But when I glanced at the Master I saw that he had gone scathless; not the faintest spot discoloured his garments nor marred the marble of his lofty brow. A prodigy then. Yet how could it have been otherwise? what defilement could prevail against him by whose touch the leper had been cleansed? *

Now we were aboard Peter's fine, new ship with a fair breeze to waft us up the lake to Capernaum. Andrew, being the best sailor in our company, took the steering-oar, and Peter's young man was assigned to manage the sheet of the sail. Jesus sat in the stern with James Minor at his side. The elderly man, worn out by the varied emotions of the past few hours, slept soundly, his grey beard resting on the Master's shoulder; the remainder of our company had bestowed themselves amidships. Inevitably the talk concerned itself with the cleansing of Reuel.

"A miracle!" declared Simon Peter, and even Thomas

nodded his head in accordance with the general verdict.

"I don't mean to detract from the wonder-working powers of

^{*} I may set down here the extraordinary circumstance that never in the years in which I accompanied Jesus did I notice the slightest spot or stain upon His apparel. Always He carried with Him a change of linen, but His garments never seemed in need of renewal or cleansing; no matter how muddy or filthy His surroundings no speck of soil ever attached itself to His clothing or person. How this immunity were possible I cannot tell, but it all seemed natural and proper to the Master, and I merely record the unquestionable fact.

the Master. But I wonder if perhaps there is not some rational

explanation," I ventured.

It was John who resolved the situation. "Don't forget," he said, "that Reuel had been legally adjudged unclean; there had been something which, throughout these years, had separated him from the common life.

"What was this something? Know well, Bar-Talmai, that there is one malady even worse than the plague of leprosy; I mean the curse of fear. So long as Reuel believed that he was unclean, he was unclean. Yes, even though his sickness may not have been the actual plague. Be that as it may, Jesus delivered him from fear and everything else follows naturally. But one must still possess the Master's power to bring about the miracle."

"What is that power?" I asked.

"Love," answered John. "Perfect love casteth out fear."

When the ship touched the quay at Capernaum, Judas Iscariot was in waiting. He sprang aboard, his lips parted and his eyes sparkling. "I went back and saw the priest," he proclaimed. "Reuel has been adjudged legally clean." A chorus of delighted exclamations greeted the welcome news. But the Master only smiled. John and I exchanged an understanding glance.

I fell to wondering why Jesus should have chosen to take that particular walk along the lakeside at this particular time. All that had happened—the meeting with Reuel, the appeal of the leper, the word that was with power, the cleansing touch, the joy of the reunited lovers, the parable of the lost sheep—what beautiful inevitability in the sequence of events!

But how could the Master have foreseen? Unless, indeed, he

knew.

MATTHEW OF THE LONELY HEART

ORD reached me that my mother had returned to our home in Cana, her health being seriously affected; accordingly I left Capernaum for the pur-

pose of paying her a brief visit.

I found Zilla lying on a couch placed in the covered gallery which overlooked the courtyard. She greeted me affectionately, and made an evident effort to appear in her usual spirits. But I was concerned to see the pallor of her face, broken only by the hectic spots of colour high upon the cheek-bones, and the emaciation of her once well-nourished figure. However, Zilla continued to make light of her illness, insisting that she was merely tired and so in need of the cool air of the hill country. I spent the night at the house, and we talked far into the evening hours; she was interested in all that I had to tell her about the Master and his ministry. Then suddenly Zilla began speaking of my uncle Joseph of Arimathæa, and of Lilli. "Have you seen them lately?" she inquired.

" No."

"Esther, the widowed daughter, is now living with her father and is managing his household. This releases Lilli from her filial obligations, and she has left Cana."

I made no comment.

"Yes, she has gone to Jerusalem under the protection of the Lady Claudia Procula. Claudia and Lilli have become great friends, and I daresay the girl has grown tired of our dull country ways. At Jerusalem and as a member of the Procurator's family, Lilli will be a part of the great world and see life in its wider aspects. It is even rumored that Claudia intends to adopt Lilli; it will be a legal process, and she will then take a Roman name."

"And perhaps make a brilliant marriage with some Gentile noble," I suggested. "That means she will be lost to us forever."

My mother looked at me keenly. "I hope," she said, "that you won't take it too much to heart, Nathanael. There was a time——"

"Only a passing fancy," I interrupted. "I took my way, and it is only just that she should take hers."

"Then you don't regret that you chose to abandon the career marked out for you by your uncle in order to follow Jesus of Nazareth?"

" No."

"Even if that meant the giving up of Lilli?"

"You mustn't press me too closely, Mother. The decision was made after the fullest consideration, and it shall stand. It isn't

as though Lilli really cared," I added impulsively.

Zilla sighed, drew me close, and kissed me. "It is growing late and I am tired," she said. "You have been a good son to me, my Nathanael, and now you have every right to live your own life."

"But, Mother, if you are really ill—if you need me——"

"Should necessity arise, I will let you know; I promise you

that. As the matter stands: go and God be with you."

A final embrace and we parted. I sought my own pallet, but agitated thoughts kept me in wakefulness. What if Lilli had truly cared! And then I recalled the words of the Master: "There is no man that hath left house * * * or mother * * * or lands for my sake, and the gospel's, but he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time * * * and in the world to come eternal life." Ah, but had I really given up all these good things for his sake; or could it be that lacking one—Lilli—they had become valueless to me? What man is able to read his own heart? But the Master—he would know.

My mother was still in her chamber when I left the house at an early hour, and I did not see her again. I reached Capernaum shortly before noon and encountered Philip; he had a wonderful story to tell me.

"Yesterday," he began, "Jesus was teaching the people from the gallery of Simon Peter's house. The courtyard was packed; no room for even a mouse. And, of course, Hananiah and his

friend Joel were in the forefront of the crowd.

"Presently there was an interruption. A certain man—I don't know his name—lay sick of the palsy, unable to walk a step. Hearing that the Master was again in Capernaum, four of his friends attempted to bring him to Jesus. But when they arrived, bearing the sick man on a litter, they found it impossible to enter the enclosure; the crowd was too great. Accordingly they carried the pallet to the roof of the house by the outside stairway. Then, rolling up a corner of the awning over the gallery, they lowered the bed by means of ropes, and so brought the paralytic directly into the Master's presence. Jesus stopped

speaking and looked at him. No one uttered a single word, but it was plain that the man was in desperate need of the Master's healing touch.

"And yet Jesus did not offer to cure him. Instead of that—so amazingly!—he said to the sick of the palsy: 'Son, be of good

cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee.' Can you imagine it!

"Whereupon Hananiah muttered loud enough for everyone to hear: 'Who is this which speaketh blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone?' And Joel laughed scornfully."

"I don't like Hananiah," I interrupted. "Or Joel either, as you well know. But surely and for once they were right. Who

but God can pardon transgressions?"

"Wait until you hear the rest of it," continued Philip. "Jesus glanced at Hananiah and instantly replied: 'Why reason ye these things in your hearts? Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise and take up thy bed, and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins (he saith to the sick of the palsy,) I say unto thee, Arise, take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house.' And immediately that very thing happened; the bedridden man rose to his feet, picked up the pallet on which he had been lying, and walked away as easily as you or I might have done."

"You saw this, Philip? With your own eyes?"

"Most assuredly. It happened just as I have told it."

"And the people; what did they say?"

"They were much astonished. And also filled with fear. As one of them expressed it: 'We have seen strange things to-day.'"

"Strange things indeed," I agreed. "One thing is certain: Hananiah has been none too friendly to the Master in the past. Now he is likely to become an enemy, an active and bitter one. Moreover, he will have the whole Pharisaic pack biting at Jesus' heels."

"The affair may blow over," said Philip thoughtfully. "Don't forget that all the people have gone out after the Master. Some even talk of proclaiming Jesus a king."

"And so invite the displeasure of Cæsar."

Philip looked grave; more upset than I have ever seen him. "If only the Master would be prudent, and not needlessly of-

fend the powers that be."

"Exactly!" agreed Philip eagerly.

"But that is not Jesus, if I read him aright. I even believe him rash enough to carry the war into Africa, as the Romans say." "You mean ---?"

"We can but wait and see," I concluded. But even I did not realize how prophetically true were my words. For the sequel was to follow hard upon the antecedent; already the stage was set for the first act of the dangerous drama.

Two days later we were again in attendance at the Sabbath-day services in the synagogue. As on the previous occasion, the building was thronged with worshippers, together with a sprinkling of curiosity-mongers, the latter intent upon seeing and hearing this new wonder-worker, Jesus of Nazareth. Of course, the Lady Claudia and Lilli were not in the women's gallery, since they had already departed for Jerusalem; but, to my surprise, Mary of Magdala was present, flaunting her opulent charms and quite indifferent to the disapproving glances with which her appearance was greeted by her feminine neighbours. Hananiah and his friends, all representative of the official ecclesiastical hierarchy, were ranged in haughty dignity upon the benches of honour.

When we entered, the floor space was already crowded and it was difficult for late comers to find a place to sit. Just before the hour of service Matthew-Levi arrived and made his way slowly between the closely packed rows of worshippers. Unfortunately his foot caught in an upturned rug, and he barely saved himself from cannoning headlong into the dignitaries of the chief seats by a clutch at the skirts of Joel the scribe. Angrily the latter twitched his garments from the grasp of those contaminating hands. "What sort of awkward animal is this!" he shouted. "It is the swine that walks as a man. Marvellous!" Alternately reddening and paling, Matthew managed to recover his balance and again started forward. No one cared to offer the renegade the poor hospitality of the end of a mat, and Matthew could find no other space in which to bestow his lean body than the far corner under the women's gallery; there he had to remain in a standing posture. But, as ever, he held his head high, and his dark eyes were quick to return in kind the contemptuous looks of his fellow-countrymen. A strong man but a lonely one, and, doubtless, an embittered soul.

As before, the chief ruler assigned no part of the liturgy to the Master, but when the services proper had been concluded, he again conveyed an unspoken invitation; had the young teacher anything to say to the people?

Immediately Jesus was on his feet. "God is a Spirit," he began with slow distinctness, "and they who worship him must

worship him in spirit and in truth." Readers of the Fourth Gospel will recall these words as forming part of the Master's conversation with the woman of Samaria at Jacob's Well.

"In spirit and in truth," he repeated. Wheeling, Jesus confronted the stolid faces of the occupants of the chief seats. "Ye hypocrites," he went on, "well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. * * * Woe unto you, Pharisees! for ye love the uppermost seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets. * * * The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat; all therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works; for they say and do not. For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers.

"But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in.

"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer:

therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation.

"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. * * Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell? * * Verily I say unto you "—his glance rested for an instant upon the Magdalene, travelled to the rigid figure of Matthew-Levi, and returned to scan the downcast faces of Hananiah and his friends—"Verily I say unto you that the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of heaven before you."

Like a panther at the spring, Jesus faced his townsmen, the men of his own city. "And thou, Capernaum," he cried, his voice swelling to an overwhelming crescendo, "which art exalted to heaven, shall be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained unto this day. But I say unto thee, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom, in the day of judgment,

than for thee."

The darting lightnings ceased to play, the rolling thunders died away.

From the gallery came the derisive tinkle of a woman's laugh. Mary of Magdala rose in her place. Even her supreme audacity could not carry her to the point of speech, here in a synagogue

where women exist only by sufferance, but the defiance of her sweeping courtesy to the Master could not be misunderstood. "Hail, Rabbi!" it seemed to say. "Hail and farewell!" Then she turned to the door leading to the outer stairway. And, as though inspired by her ironical valediction, Joel also left his seat and, with an exaggeratedly low obeisance to the Master, he too departed from the synagogue.

Once more the repetition of those soul-shaking words: "God is a Spirit: and they who worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." How strangely they fell upon the ears of those who listened; how thrillingly they challenged my own spirit.

"God is a Spirit—in spirit and in truth."

"Two men," continued Jesus, "went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God, be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every man that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

The assembly sat in fixed attention; not a sound, not a movement anywhere. Finally the chief ruler rose and gave the signal for dispersion. Silently the congregation made its way into the outer air. Last of all came Hananiah; he strode by without even a glance at the Master. But his face was dark with suppressed passion.

The building was now cleared except for our particular group and the lonely figure of Matthew in his far corner. I observed that he still stood squarely on his feet, but now his head was

bowed and his eyes downcast.

"Lord, teach us to pray."

It was Simon Zelotes who had spoken, his voice lowered to a mere whisper. Yes, the Cananæan; the man of a rough tongue and of an outward disposition as prickly to handle as a chestnut burr. "Lord, teach us to pray," he repeated, "as John also taught his disciples."

The Master beckoned, and we gathered about him.

this manner therefore," answered Jesus, "pray ye:
"Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the

power and the glory, for ever. Amen."

For an instant Jesus stood silent; then he went on: "And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven, may forgive you your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses."

Now the Master was leading us out of the synagogue. I was the last to leave the building, but a backward glance showed me that Matthew still remained in his far corner, and I could see that his lips were moving. Perhaps the Master had in mind the words of the prophet Isaiah: "Behold, I have refined thee, but not with silver; I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction."

But was there not something beyond even this? Here was Matthew despised by the men of his own race; and always he had returned scorn for scorn, reviling for reviling, hate for hate. And now he stood face to face with the hardest of all life's obligations; had not the Master himself pointed out the essential core and condition of all true prayer, the forgiveness of injuries? "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors."

Matthew stood praying. And there we left him-Matthew of

the Lonely Heart.

At noon that same day we were passing through a cornfield. Simon Peter, being hungry, plucked some ears, and, rubbing off the husks between his hands, he began to eat; quite naturally most of us followed his example.

A harsh voice addressed the Master. "Why do they on the Sabbath day," it demanded, "that which is not lawful? Do ye

not know the Law?"

"Have ye never read," answered Jesus, "what David did, when he had need, and was an-hungered, he, and they which were with him? How he went into the house of God * * * and did eat the shewbread, which is not lawful to eat but for the priests, and gave also to them which were with him?"

Hananiah stood silent and confused. Several doctors of the

Law were in the group, but they too had no word to say.

"The sabbath," continued Jesus, "was made for man, and not man for the sabbath: therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath. Or have ye not read in the Law, how that on the sabbath days the priests in the temple profane the sabbath, and are blameless? But I say unto you, That in this place is one greater than the temple. But if ye had known what this

meaneth, I will have mercy and not sacrifice, ye would not have

condemned the guiltless."

An incredible assertion on the part of the Master, this assumption of final jurisdiction in matters of faith and order! Still more amazing, the apparent acquiescence with which it was received! For Hananiah turned on his heel and walked away, followed by his ecclesiastical supporters, and we continued to break our fast after the primitive fashion set by Simon Peter; that is, all except Thomas. For he is the strictest of us all in the practice of our religion. "I am not sure that I can follow Jesus in this," he said, with that characteristic screwing up of his bushy eyebrows. "One greater than the Temple! How can that be?"

"If Jesus say so, it must be true," put in James Minor, and Judas Iscariot chuckled in sarcastic amusement at such sim-

plicity.

"I have been counting my paces," announced Thomas, "and the table is close to a thousand, the utmost limit for a Sabbath-day's journey. I shall turn back," and forthwith he proceeded to do so.

A trifling incident this; so, at least, it may seem to the men of this later generation, born and nurtured in the liberty wherewith Christ hath set us free. But, at the time of which I write, the Law as given by Moses had been so overlaid by the glosses and interpretations of its official expositors that it had become indeed a burden too grievous to be borne; particularly in this matter of Sabbath observance. To quote but two of these so-called "Traditions of the Elders," the meticulous spinning by spider-like minds of a web of legal subtleties wherewith to entrap and destroy the souls of men:

"If thou hast a ribbon fastened to thy tunic but not sewn to it; then when thou goest to the synagogue, thou breakest the

Sabbath, since thou art now carrying a burden.

"If thou walkest on the grass thou art breaking the Sabbath, for that is a lesser sort of threshing. If thou doth furrow the soil with thy sandal, thou breakest the Sabbath, for that is a lesser degree of ploughing."

"There is but one accounting for it," remarked James Major to me as we walked homeward. "The Master speaketh as 'one

having authority, and not as the scribes."

Now, as I have previously noted, James, the brother of John, possesses a mind that is the surest and sanest of us all; it must be as he says. But what a vista opens before us! Deliverance, not indeed from law but from the bondage of the Law. And then a great light seemed to flood my very soul. For here was our Mas-

ter, Jesus of Nazareth, putting into actual effect the prophetic dictum of Hosea uttered centuries earlier: "I will have mercy and not sacrifice." How unthinkable such a pronouncement at the epoch in which it was voiced! how subversive even to-day of the vast and complicated system erected by the scribes and doctors upon the comparatively simple foundation of the Mosaic code! "For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, upon men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers." Hosea indeed foreshadows, but Jesus fulfills, an entirely new conception of the divine nature: "I will have mercy and not sacrifice."

Two mornings later Philip and I were passing through the market-place at Capernaum. Over at one side a crowd had gathered, and it was plain that some accident had happened. "A man knocked down by the horse of a drunken Roman legionary," explained a bystander, and we pushed forward, jostling

our way without ceremony.

On the ground and surrounded by a circle of hard-featured spectators, lay Joel. But now he was very subdued; for his injuries, while not mortal, were assuredly painful and disabling. At his side knelt Matthew—Matthew of all people! With deft movements, Matthew wiped the blood and filth from his disfigured face; his hands held a cup of cold water to the lips which had so grievously insulted him at the Sabbath-day services in the synagogue. Presently Joel managed to rise, still groaning, to his feet; but Matthew had to lend an arm to the wounded man to assist him in reaching his house a few steps away.

"I must run back and tell the Master about this," declared Philip, his eyes sparkling. "For I am sure Jesus will want to

know. Wait for me here."

Within a very short time Philip had returned; he looked a trifle crestfallen.

"What did the Master say?" I asked.

"Nothing at all," answered Philip. "Jesus merely smiled, quite as though knowing just what had happened. But how

could that be possible!"

"Remember that he saw me under the fig tree," I countered. "And there was the woman at Jacob's Well who besought her neighbours: 'Come see a man, which told me all things that ever I did.' Yes, my Philip, we have still many things to learn about the Master."

"It does seem so," assented my cousin, but he continued to look mightily puzzled in mind.

That same afternoon we were all in the market-place and, as usual, Matthew stood watchfully upon the porch of his little tax office. Jesus stopped and for the first time spoke directly to the publican. "Follow me," he said. And Matthew, not even waiting to leave in the office the bundle of papers in his hand, came over—very slowly, very shyly—and joined us. Finally he plucked up sufficient courage to meet the eye of Jesus, and the warm tide of the Master's welcome flowed about Matthew's lonely soul, energizing and quickening the man's whole being—now and for always. "Follow me," repeated Jesus, and we walked on; the circle of the Twelve had at last been completed.

That night Matthew made a great feast in his own house, and, of course, Jesus was present as the guest of honour; also we the disciples. But the rest of the company! Tax-collectors like Matthew himself, Roman riff-raff, and other men of notoriously evil lives. Who else could be expected to make up the roster of a Jewish renegade's acquaintance? The evening was clear and warm, and so Matthew had caused the tables to be set under the grape arbour in the garden, open to the gaze of every passer-by. Presently Hananiah's disapproving face appeared over the low wall. "Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners?" he inquired, looking straight at John and me. A disagreeable question, but it was Jesus himself who answered it. "They that be whole," he said, "need not a physician, but they that are sick. For I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

Hananiah walked away, and Matthew's feast, the final farewell to his former life of shameful ease, proceeded on its course.

"Not the righteous—but sinners!" Ah, but Jesus had summoned me also to his service. Had I ever thought of myself—as a sinner?

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

T was the middle of the month Abh and the feast of Wood Offerings was at hand. This was not one of the great festivals of obligation when every pious Israelite is supposed to present himself at the Temple; nevertheless, the Master signified his intention of going up to Jerusalem. Always the urge was upon him to lose no opportunity of returning to his Father's house.

Jesus took with him only John and Jude. Simon Peter, James Minor, and Andrew were engaged in settling up their fishing business. Thomas was absent on a journey to Ptolemais, the seaport; and the others were busy with the loose ends of their private affairs. For myself the occasion seemed propitious for making a long-deferred trip to Pella, one of the cities of the Decapolis, to look after some family property. For the time being, therefore, our company of disciples was scattered in various directions.

Ten days later I returned to Capernaum. That same night I sat at meat with John, and he told me of all that had happened at Jerusalem; in particular, of the healing of a bedridden and im-

potent man at the pool called Bethesda.

According to John, the Master went to Bethesda and found there a man who had been ill of a disabling disease for upward of eight-and-thirty years. "When Jesus saw him lie," continued John, "and knew that he had been a long time in that case, he saith unto him, Wilt thou be made whole? The impotent man answered him, Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool; but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me. Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk. And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked."

Indeed a marvellous cure, but, as John went on to explain, the pool happened to lie outside of the city wall, and the healing had been wrought on the Sabbath day. Whereupon certain of the Pharisees chose to take offence. Later, when it was established that the Master had done this work of wonder, these strict religionists taxed Jesus with the breaking of the Sabbath law.

"What was the Master's reply?" I asked.

"Jesus saith to them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I

"That could never satisfy them," I mused; and John acknowledged that, hearing, they became still angrier; ready indeed to kill the Master, since he had not only broken the Law, but had asserted his equality with God.

"But, John, there is danger in the situation; danger both

great and immediate."

"Even closer at hand than you imagine," he answered. "Simon of Capernaum is coming to Galilee to determine for himself what Jesus is saying and doing. Of course, he will join forces with Hananiah, and all the weight of official authority will be brought to bear against the Master. I am afraid—frankly so."

"Where is Jesus to-night? We should see and talk with him;

decide upon a united course of action."

"He is gone into some solitary place—for prayer and meditation. Jesus has it in mind to deliver a discourse to the people, definitely setting forth the constitution of the kingdom of heaven, an entirely new Way of righteousness and of living."

"When and where?"

"At noonday to-morrow. The place appointed is that high, twin-peaked hill on the Nazareth road, overlooking the plain of Gennesaret."

I nodded. "Yes, I know it," I assented. "To-morrow then." Whereupon John went away, and I, weary and dispirited, retired to my troubled rest.

Long before noon on the following day the highway towards Nazareth was thronged with people intent upon reaching the meeting-place designated by the Master; it seemed as though everyone in the surrounding countryside would be present to hear what Jesus had to say, in this his first formal utterance,

concerning the Way of righteousness.

Southward from Capernaum the terrain becomes rough and broken—boulder-strewn ridges, bare indeed of grass but bright with clusters of creamy-yellow asphodels towering above the pink blossoms of the cyclamen, and interspersed with great patches of sapphire and turquoise thistles, and the sulphur-coloured flowers of the prickly cactus. A little further on rises a considerable elevation of blackened fire-rock. Its summit is a table-like plateau, but flanked by two peaks which, in later times, would become known as the Horns of Hattin. An inhos-

pitable place, but, carved into the southern escarpment and about halfway up the cliff, lies a little natural amphitheatre in which soil and leaf-mould have collected to give sustenance to a rich carpeting of grass. The sea of Galilee is not visible at this point, but there is a wide vista to the south over the plain of Gennesaret with its fields of yellow corn, mingled with the green of orchards of fig, olive, and walnut. Far to the northeast can be seen the turban of snow crowning the majestic head of Mount Hermon.

When I arrived, I saw the Master seated upon a mound at the upper curve of the amphitheatre. Around him were gathered my fellow-disciples, including Matthew, busy as usual with inkhorn and writing-tablet, Simon Zelotes, and Jude, his face aglow with an ardent expectancy. Seated below on the springy turf were a great company of people. All sorts and conditions of men were represented in the gathering, and their parti-coloured costumes—the saffron-tinted wool robes and tawny camel's-hair tunics of desert shepherds; rich merchants wearing turbans of mauve and green, of yellow and black; the rainbowhued head scarves of silk, distinguishing mark of noble ladies; peasants in their rough working clothes of faded blue cloth; village women, their clean white cloaks thrown over the red embroideries of their festival garments; the gilded mail and scarlet surcoats of Roman legionary officers; ecclesiastics in their flowing robes from whose corners depended the ritual tassels of twisted hyacinth and blue cords—all this made a gorgeous tapestry of light and colour, woven as though on a living loom. The day was warm, but the direct rays of the sun were tempered by a slight haziness in the atmosphere, and the cool currents of air swirling down from the Horns of Hattin quickly dissipated the heated vapours rising from the plain. A multitude, intent and questioning; and, gazing (a little wistfully, I thought) upon their expectant faces, the Master opened his mouth, and taught them-the Sermon on the Mount, as recorded by Matthew and Luke.

As the Master drew near to the end of his discourse, his eyes turned to rest on the inflexible faces of Hananiah and Simon of Capernaum who were also of the company. "Except your right-eousness," he asseverated, "shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven. * * Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name?

and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that

work iniquity."

Hananiah started up as though he would make fierce rejoinder. But Simon put out a restraining hand, and the Master continued his peroration amidst an unbroken silence, using his

ever-favourite vehicle of the parable or story.

"Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man which built his house upon a rock: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the wind blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it."

The sermon had been concluded, but the people seemed loath to depart: many crowded about the Master, asking him questions, seeking further interpretation of his words. For they were astonished at his doctrine. I made my way through the throng to the lower slope of the amphitheatre in search of a secluded spot in which to meditate upon all that I had seen and

heard.

A woman standing in a place apart accosted me. At first glance I took her for a peasant, since she was clad in a coarse brown robe with a hood drawn closely over her head. Then I realized that the shabby outer garment but partially concealed a dress of rich brocade, and under the hem of the rough country cloth could be seen a pair of tiny slippers of crimson leather, embroidered in gold thread and encrusted with roundels of amethyst chips and iridescent nacre. I looked into the dark face and recognized Mary of Magdala; her short upper lip curled disdainfully as she spoke with rapid utterance:

"What foolishness is this! I came to-day to hear more about that magic bread of which if a man eat he shall live forever. For I like not the slow passage of the years that the locusts have eaten, destroying my youth and beauty. And, at the end, the

eternal night of the tomb!" She shuddered.

"But what have I heard from your Jesus this day? The base morality of slaves—the inheritance of the earth allotted to the meek, the kingdom of heaven given to the poor in spirit, the entering in at the straight gate, the forgiveness of injuries, the turning of the other cheek, alms and fasting in secret, treasure laid up in heaven—faugh!

"Go and tell your master this from Mary of Magdala: Three times now have I come to Jesus of Nazareth, and this is the last occasion on which I shall demean myself to no purpose. If we meet again, it will be because Jesus comes to me. But let him beware how he draws near. I have my seven devils constantly

on the prowl, and they do not suffer fools gladly."

With an impatient movement, Mary threw aside her disfiguring disguise, and stood revealed in all of her glorious young womanhood; her raven locks covered with a golden net, the green fire of emeralds flashing at ears and throat—a picture of arrogant loveliness. Turning, she walked to the bottom of the slope where waited a sumptuous horse litter with a canopy of purple silk and side curtains of Phœnician lace. The litter was borne by a pair of magnificent, jet-black mules of the big-boned, peninsular breed. Their bits were of silver and the frontlets of their head-stalls were fashioned of the same brilliant metal; while the blue loin cloths were embroidered with arabesques of silver thread, and the harness of vermillion-dyed leather was garnished with a plenitude of little bells, argent in colour and highly polished.

Beside the litter was a mounted escort, a score of half-wild Idumæan mercenaries from the Roman garrison at Tiberias—lean-faced men garbed in yellow goatskins and wearing green-ish-bronze helmets surmounted by plumes of horsehair; they bestrode Arabian horses of the authentic desert strain, and they carried excessively long lances with gold and crimson pennons depending from the spear-heads. The commander dismounted, and assisted the Magdalene into the litter. Then, with a great clattering of hooves, the equipage took the steep descending

road to the lake.

When I reached my lodgings, I found there a letter from my friend Lucius Sylla Verus; it had been brought by a caravan engaged in the gum tragacanth trade between the desert of Sinai and the western ports. The letter reproached me gently for my long failure to revisit Jerusalem, and reminded me that that flagon of Falernian wine still remained uncorked. There was the usual patter of garrison gossip and the trivial happenings of a provincial town. But the concluding paragraph was of more than ordinary interest, and I transcribe it verbatim.

"Yesterday I saw the Lady Claudia Procula at the Prætorium accompanied by her latest friend and maid of honour. A Jewish girl from your own barbarous country of Galilee, my Nathanael, and truly an engaging bundle of femininity. I did not learn her

native name, but since she has now been formally adopted by Claudia, that does not greatly matter; henceforth she is to be known as the Lady Veronica, and already she is the toast of half the Legion. A sweet piece! and armed with the most melting pair of sloe eyes that ever caused a man's heart to become as water.

"May the jealous gods allow you to continue in health and

well-being. Vale!"

So my mother had been right, and now Lilli is forever beyond my reach and ken. How wise I had been in turning a deaf ear to my uncle Joseph's counsel, in refusing to presume upon my cousinly privileges!
Or how foolish!

THE DEAD ARISE

AVING gone directly to my lodgings in Capernaum, I had missed the concluding event of the great day, the healing of the centurion's servant. It was Judas who told me of what had happened; bubbling over with excitement, the Iscariot called me down from the upper room where I was still pondering over my letter from Lucius Verus. "Yet another work of wonder!" he proclaimed.

"You know Varro," he continued, "who built for us that

fine new synagogue at Capernaum?"

I nodded assent.

"Well, hardly had Jesus come down from the mount when Varro met him, in great distress over the illness of his favourite servant, one Ennius by name. The man was sick of the palsy, and apparently in immediate danger of death; there was no time to lose.

"Jesus promised that he would come and recover the sick man, but Varro replied—so surprisingly—'Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof; but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed. For I also am a man set under authority, having under me soldiers, and I say unto one, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it.' Was it not amazing!"

"What did the Master answer?"

"He marvelled, and said to them that followed: 'Verily, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.' And Jesus said to the centurion: 'Go thy way; and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee.'" Judas paused for an impressive instant. "And Ennius was recovered in the self-same hour!" he concluded.

I remained silent.

"Yes, the world is gone after him," declared Judas, his eyes flashing with an exultant fire. "Astonishing? Well, I tell you now that there will be even greater works than these. And then, and then—" he ended significantly.

I was in no mood for discussion, and presently the Iscariot

rose and went his way.

I sat alone and meditated. Truly, as Judas had said, the world is gone after Jesus, and small wonder. For the list of mighty works is growing day by day. But can one say that it is the Master's deliberate intention to establish his authority by means of these signs and wonders? Surely not. On the contrary, it is only because these poor wretches appeal to his compassion that Jesus puts out his healing hand. My philosophy was soon to be put to an infinitely severer test; a still greater prodigy was close at hand, standing even now on the threshold of to-morrow.

On the day following the Sermon on the Mount, the Master had taken us with him on an extended journey of some five-and-twenty miles, by way of Endor, to the plain of Esdraelon. Several times he had stopped at wayside hamlets to proclaim the glad tidings of the kingdom of God, and to minister to the sick and afflicted. Crowds had come to see and hear him, and so many had followed from point to point that our company had swelled into a multitude of eager disciples when, towards the ending of the day, we drew near to the village of Nain, "the pleasant place," as its name signifies.

Presently the sound of wailing was heard, and from the town gate another multitude emerged, a funeral procession; we

massed on either side of the highway to let it pass.

Evidently the last rites for a poor person, since the musical instruments were restricted to the minimum requirement of two flutes and a pair of cymbals, while there was but one professional mourning woman to pour forth the monotonous refrain: "Alas,

the lion! Alas, the hero!"

In the forefront walked the women, after the custom peculiar to our province of Galilee—a convention resting upon the tradition that it was through a woman that death had come into the world. The chief mourner was distinguished by being garbed in sackcloth with the ceremonial ashes upon her uncovered head; and it was possible to gather from the lamentations of the throng that she was a widow and that the dead man had been her only son,

Following, came the bier carried by sympathetic neighbours who walked with their feet unshod. The mortuary litter was of willow wickerwork, and on it lay the body of a young man, wound in a sheet of coarse, white linen. The hands and feet were bound about with grave-bands, but the face, pale with the

waxy hue of dissolution, was bare. By the side of the corpse lay pens and an inkhorn, indicating that in life he had followed the profession of a writer.

Once again swelled forth the chorus of the mourners in the traditional formula: "Weep with them, all ye who are bitter of heart," to be answered by the sobbing of the stricken mother. But now the Master intervened; with uplifted hand he stepped into the middle of the roadway; compassionately he looked upon the sorrowing woman; authoritatively he spoke: "Weep not!" Instantly every sound was replaced by a profound silence.

Jesus stepped forward and touched the bier. Again, and still more authoritatively, he spoke: "Young man, I say unto thee, Arise." Immediately the dead man sat up and began to speak—incoherent, babbling words as of one suddenly awakened from sleep. The Master assisted him to descend from the bier; then, taking him by the hand, he led him to his mother's arms. Whereupon, "There came a fear upon all: and they glorified God, saying, That a great prophet is risen up among us, and

that God hath visited his people."

There was a touch on my shoulder and I turned to look into the keen, high-bred face of Luke of Antioch whom I had met when he was studying the art of medicine at Alexandria. An attractive-appearing man, with his glowing eyes set under a high forehead, and his features cut in the clean Grecian mould. But the eminently characteristic mark of Luke's personality lay in his hands—the capable and yet warmly sympathetic hands of the good physician—and he was now offering them to me after the western fashion, a cordial greeting of esteem and friendship.

"But what brings you to Nain?" I inquired.

"For some months I have been practising my art in Jerusalem," replied Luke. "Yesterday Queen Herodias sent an armed escort, together with a message asking me to come immediately to Tiberias and treat one of her favourite slaves who is ill of an erysipelas. Of course I complied, and we had just reached the village when I became aware that something out of the ordinary was on foot."

"Then you were a witness of the prodigy, the raising from

the dead of the widow's son?"

"I saw this young rabbi halt the funeral procession, heard the words commanding the dead man to arise, and was close at hand when the youth descended from the bier and was taken to his mother."

"What do you think?"

"I hardly know," returned Luke cautiously. "Certainly the young man is now as truly alive as any one of us. I saw and spoke to him. He appeared to be in perfect health and with no sign of any previous illness."

"But had he really been dead?" I persisted.

"Ah, that is the question. I had no opportunity of examin-

ing him before the occurrence of this seeming marvel.

"Now there is a disease," continued Luke, "which in the Greek we call $\kappa \alpha \tau \dot{\alpha} \lambda \eta \psi \iota s$. It is in the nature of a trance and closely simulates the true dissolution. The sufferer from catelepsy may seem to be dead; there is an apparent rigor mortis, and no mist of breath can be detected on the polished surface of a metal plate. Even the experienced eye of a physician may be deceived, and the ordinary observer would be quite justified in assuming that the end had come. And yet the condition is not necessarily mortal. The patient may recover; indeed generally does so."

"Then this is what actually happened?"

"How can I say? It may be—but, frankly, I don't know." Philip joined us. He was acquainted with Luke and he was warm in his greeting. "You must come and meet the Master," he urged.

Luke glanced at me doubtfully.

"The Master is Jesus of Nazareth," I explained.

Luke's eyes lightened. "Ah, I have heard of him," he said, "and, of course, I shall be glad to know this new worker of wonders. I will rejoin you, Nathanael, in a few moments. Wait for me near the horses," and he indicated the little group of Herod's bodyguard who continued to observe the scene, with the stolid indifference of professional soldiers, from the vantage point of their saddles. Philip hurried Luke away, and I found a convenient resting place on a lichen-covered boulder.

A few moments, Luke had said; but it was nearer half an hour before he reluctantly parted from Jesus and came back to find me, his eyes shining and his cheeks flushed. "Truly a marvellous teacher!" he exclaimed. "Never heard I any man speak as this man! We are to meet again. He gave me the

promise, and I assuredly shall not forget it."

We had a little further converse, and then Luke declared that he must resume his journey to Herod's capital. He was obliged to return as soon as possible to Jerusalem, but surely I would shortly be coming to the Holy City, and then we could renew our old acquaintanceship. Whereupon Luke mounted his horse and, accompanied by his escort, retook the road to Tiberias. It was not until he had disappeared in a cloud of white limestone dust that I recalled vexedly my omission to make further inquiry concerning the prodigy of the reanimated youth. Had Luke been able to secure any new details of a case so interesting to a man of medicine? Or what had Jesus told him? I wondered why the subject had not been uppermost in Luke's mind when he rejoined me; this should have been the very first word from his lips. But apparently Jesus himself had been Luke's only thought; it was as though the Master had been all that mattered. I could understand that, and yet it would have been interesting to hear definitely how this mystery of physical resurrection presented itself to the trained and scientific mind; what did Luke really think?

Although the hour was late, Jesus decided to continue the march towards Jezreel. The excitement over this wondrous exercise of the Master's power was subsiding; the empty bier and its bearers had disappeared through the city gate; both the multitude which had followed Jesus and the crowd of Nain townspeople were melting away; whilst the happy mother and her son had withdrawn, with a profound obeisance, from the presence of the Master. As ever, Jesus preferred to avoid unprofitable discussion of his mighty works, and so we did not even enter the town. A couple of Roman miles farther on there was an abandoned inn which would afford lodging for the night, and half-an-hour's walk brought us to our haven.

All were tired and hungry. But Philip had purchased, at a wayside farm, a goatskin of thin though fairly palatable country wine; and Thomas, the ever-provident, carried a supply of unthreshed wheat in the capacious bosom of his robe. Even Simon Zelotes, with a shy smile, produced a few bunches of raisins; and thus our evening meal was assured. Sitting cross-legged on the hard earth floor, each man made a fire of dry wheat stalks gleaned from a near-by field, and proceeded to parch his share of the grain over the little blaze, while the goatskin passed from hand to hand in cheerful fellowship. A rude and primitive repast; and I thought—somewhat regretfully—of the bountiful table which even now was being spread at my mother's house in Cana. But I quickly forgot about these forsaken creature comforts; was not the Master one of our company, and is not the life more than meat?

Judas Iscariot had slipped away from the circle, but now he returned accompanied by two strangers who had been hovering on the outskirts of our march all day long; wild-looking men they were, with tangled beards and clad in ragged robes of camel's skin. It seems that they were disciples of John the Baptist who was still confined in the desert fortress of Machærus, and their master had sent them with a message to Jesus. Roughly and directly came the inquiry: "Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?"

Calmly the Master answered: "Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see: the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them. And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me."

Judas gave vent to an angry exclamation, and the faces of James and John showed plainly their disappointment at the Master's reply to the Baptist's inquiry. To me, however, it brought a definite satisfaction. When the woman of Samaria said to him, "I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things," Jesus had returned the unqualified assertion: "I that speak unto thee am he." At the time, this assumption of Messianic power and dignity had seemed to be fraught with peril; it would stir up against him the enmity of the priestly party, and also provoke the wrath of the scribes and Pharisees. But now apparently Jesus had retreated from his former position. He had called attention indeed to the mighty works; still these were already bruited abroad and were in every man's mouth. So long as they were not made the foundation for claims which would strike not only at the ecclesiastical power of the Sanhedrin but also at the secular sovereignty of Rome, there could be no open ground for offence.

On the morrow, our visitors departed on their return to the fortress of Machærus, and we resumed our itinerary in southern Samaria; thence across the Jordan, and ending with a wide sweep northward through the tetrarchy of Philip. Everywhere we were greeted by eager multitudes, while many who were sick and burdened with bodily infirmities sought aid of the Master and were not turned away. Yet it seemed to me that Jesus concerned himself chiefly with his mission of spiritual enlightenment; always it was the poor and forgotten among the people who had preached to them the glad tidings of the Gospel.

In particular, one memory remains with me—the picture of an old man, a mere mass of human wreckage, drawn and torn upon the rack of untoward circumstances. Friendless and at the point of death he lay by the roadside, too weak even to voice his plaint. But, seeing him, the Master stopped. Bending over, he took the old man's hand; and ah! the light in those faded eyes as he listened to the gracious words spoken by Jesus, words seemingly meant for his ears alone, and yet words that should be repeated throughout the ages to them that are in any trouble: "Come unto me, all ye that travail and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you." A few moments later the man died, still grasping the hand of Jesus, but a smile rested on those bloodless lips as he sank back to his eternal sleep amidst the sweet-scented thyme. Yes, to the poor the Gospel of an all-embracing, all-comprehending love had been well and truly preached. "And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me."

Now we were back in Capernaum, his own city. That evening Philip sought me out at my lodgings; he had a strange tale to tell, picked up from his Greek friend Artemidorus, one of the minor officials at Herod's court.

"It happened last night," began Philip, "or rather at an early hour this morning. Lentulus, Mary of Magdala's latest lover, was giving a great feast, it being the anniversary of the Emperor's accession to the throne, and King Herod himself

was among the guests.

"The wine had circulated freely, and presently something occurred to ruffle the Magdalene's temper—none of the sweetest as you know. She so far lost control of herself as to insult the King—most outrageously. Lentulus, trying to restrain her, laid his hand upon Mary's mouth, whereupon the wildcat bit

it to the bone. You can fancy the fine uproar!

"Now Lentulus is thick both in body and mind, ordinarily the soul of good nature, and not a little afraid—so they say of Mary when she is in one of her black moods. But this was too much even for him; and, being skinful of wine, he found courage to take immediate action against the vixen. Swearing by all the gods in the Roman calendar, he had Mary stripped of her clothes and finery, and turned into the street. Then, being quite mad from the pain of his wound and the injurious assault upon his royal guest, Lentulus ordered that his pack of Lebanon wolfhounds should be set on the track of the fugitive, and he insisted that the whole company should take horse and follow; it would be rare sport to see the haughty Magdalene pulled down by the dogs and torn to pieces. It chanced, however, that no one could find the key to release the hounds from their padlocked leashes of iron chains, and so that feature of the entertainment had to be abandoned. But Mary's reign as favourite is definitely over, and Herod has issued a decree of

death if ever again she dares to show her face in the capital. A pretty story, isn't it?"

"Where is she now?"

"Out in the hills I suppose; no one would dare to give her shelter or even a crust of bread after what has happened."

Borne on the wings of an approaching storm from the Great Sea, a fearsome sound smote our ears—a long-drawn-out shriek followed by a crescendo of maniacal ululations. Philip's ruddy

face paled as he listened.

"There she is now," he whispered. "Perhaps not far away!" He sprang up and would have barred the door had I not forestalled his action. "We can't let the wretched woman stay in such case," I protested. "There is a promise of hail in that wind. Without garments, food, or lodging it may mean death for Mary of Magdala. Let me go!"

But Philip threw his sinewy arms about my shoulder. "Have you forgotten," he cried, "that she is not alone, that she has her seven devils with her! Not for a thousand worlds would I venture into such company. Nor shall you, my Nathanael." Philip forced me back into the house, for I was but a child in his hands, and I had to submit to his will or rather to his

stronger muscles.

A figure passed before the still open door, and melted quietly into the shadows. It was the Master, and I recalled Mary of Magdala's mocking invitation that he should come to her, coupled with the warning against her unholy familiars. And now he had taken the unhappy woman at her word; he had gone to seek that which was lost upon the dark mountains of sin and uncleanness. A flash of lightning, and then a roll of thunder punctuated by the rattle of hail. But ever above the elemental uproar shrilled the voices of the seven devils contending for the possession of the Magdalene's soul, and my heart grew faint and sick.

The hours passed, I know not how. The violence of the tempest had seemed to heighten steadily as I listened, and Philip's face grew grey with fear; speechless we crouched upon

the floor of hard-beaten clay, and waited-waited.

A final cry piercing like a sword through the tumult, a cry that carried to the ultimate limit of human agony. And then, when it seemed as though flesh and spirit could bear no more without being torn asunder, that cry broke and fell into the void of silence. Simultaneously the shrieking of the wind and the mutter of the thunder died away, and I fancied that I could hear the beating of unseen wings above our lowly rooftree; the

drama had been played to its last curtain. But who had been the victor in the strife? The seven devils or Jesus of Nazareth?

Worn out by the emotional strain, I must have dropped asleep. When I awoke, stiff and chilled from my huddled posture in a corner of the room, the full dawn had come. With a glance at Philip, still slumbering profoundly, I unbarred the door and stepped out into the blue and gold of a perfect day. The sun's rays were gilding the wavelets on the lake, but my eyes turned instinctively towards the western highlands. Down the rocky path strode the Master. Even at this distance I could see that his face looked pale and drawn from the long vigil. But his step was that of a conqueror, one mighty to save to the uttermost. And so I rejoiced and gave thanks to the God of heaven and earth whose mercy endureth forever.

XII

THE GREATEST STORY IN THE WORLD

HORTLY after noon of this same day the Master signified his desire that I should accompany him on a brief journey in the direction of Cana; James Minor made the third member of the party. The elderly man appeared to be in low spirits. Doubtless he had heard of the violent scenes attendant upon the expulsion of his daughter Mary from her lover's home in Tiberias, and the burden of her shame rested heavily on his shoulders. But no word was said concerning the unhappy affair.

It will be remembered that the worn-out, abandoned farm belonging to James Minor was situated on the highway between Cana and Capernaum, and I could see that his depression increased as each familiar landmark was reached and passed. And then, as we rounded a turn in the road and came within sight of James's old home, a stunning surprise greeted us. For lo! a veritable transformation had taken place. Occupying the site of the ruinous house stood a commodious dwelling, built of field stone and made brilliant by a coating of whitewash. Along the front ran a porch screened by a trellis of trumpet vines now in full flower. And the roof was of Roman tile! a refinement rarely met with in a rural district. Young poplars and plane trees had been planted in lieu of that distressful old sycamore, once the sole shelter of James Minor's doorstep. The fields surrounding the house had been cleared of briers and stones and now bore a fine crop of ripening grain, while the clover patch was alive with bees winging their way between the crimson blossoms and the row of new, substantially built hives.

In the background were presses for oil and wine; also a capacious barn, its mow full of hay and its stalls tenanted by sleek milch cows whose contented lowing fell gratefully on the ear. Alongside of the barn was an artificial pool fed by a rivulet of clear spring water. Half a dozen farm servants were engaged in washing sheep, preparatory to the process of shearing; the cheerful confusion produced by the bleating of the animals and the shouts of the labourers filled the air; everywhere

the goodly hum and bustle of a prosperous agricultural establishment. James rubbed his eyes and stared again; of speech

he was incapable.

Down the lane leading from an upland field came a grainladen stone-boat drawn by a yoke of splendid oxen with nosegays tied on their wide-branching horns, and attended by a tall, deeply sunburned man whose superior dress and bearing stamped him as one in authority. Noticing our presence, he came forward and bade us welcome. "But who lives here?" asked James, suddenly recovering his voice and plainly curious about all this magnificence. "Who is the owner of this great domain?" he continued.

The man looked hard at his questioner. "Are you not that James whom men surname the Less?" he inquired composedly.

"I am indeed thus known," answered James. "And properly so, since my worldly possessions are but one degree above the vanishing point. Yes, I am James the Less."

"Then it is you who owns this fine estate. I am El-Nathan,

and I have the honour to be your chief steward."

James sucked in his breath. "But—but——" he stuttered. "All is yours, my lord. And the property is even greater than formerly. Do you see that splendid stand of barley?" He pointed to a wide acreage beyond the brook which had originally formed the boundary line of the farm.

"I had long coveted that piece of good land," confessed James. "But I could never save sufficient silver coin with

which to acquire it."

"It is yours now, my master," affirmed El-Nathan. "That particular land was added to your holding this very year, in time for the spring planting. I hope my work meets with your

approval," he concluded.

But James's astonishment had again deprived him of coherent speech; he stood there with his mouth open, so complete a picture of bewilderment that I could not forbear laughing. I tried to check my mirth, but, in turning away, I met the eye of Jesus full of a smiling comprehension. Yes, the Master had understood, and I blushed.

El-Nathan led the way to the porch, and made us comfortable with rugs and cushions. He explained that several months ago he had been commissioned to take possession, in the name of James Minor, of the abandoned property, and also provided with funds to put it in prime condition. He had done his best, and he trusted that his labours had been successful and acceptable.

"But who is my unknown and most generous benefactor?"

asked James.

El-Nathan declared with the utmost gravity that he was under a pledge of secrecy, and could give no further information. "But it is truly your farm," he continued, "and everything that you see—house, buildings, flocks, herds, standing crops, and harvested treasures of corn and wine, of honey and oil—belongs to you, James the Less, and to you alone. And I am your very humble servant, El-Nathan. I have spoken."

El-Nathan clapped his hands, and gave direction to a servingmaid who answered the summons to prepare for us the evening meal. Then, with the excuse that he must see how the sheep-

shearing was getting on, he left us.

The Master and I would have been quite content to sit on the porch and enjoy the wide-spread panorama of field and fell, with the turquoise sheen of the Sea of Galilee in the middle distance. But James was like a child with a new toy, and he insisted that we should accompany him on a tour of his recreated domain. We saw and admired it all—the cattle in the stalls; the huge piles of snowy fleece reft from the backs of the sheep, now naked and ashamed of their despoilment; the stores of white milk and yellow cream in the dairy house, kept cool by the little brook which ran through it; the honey-laden bees arriving in a constant procession at the hives; the grain bins heaped high with their golden treasures—yes, it was all very good; and James, at regular intervals, would burst into a panegyric upon the mysterious good genius who had wrought this miracle.

The sun was westering as we returned to the living-porch. Upon a low-legged table had been arranged a tempting repast—circular loaves of barley meal, a dish of pulpy, red-veined figs, little round cakes of honey and date flour, a pitcher of clotted cream, and bunches of aromatic watercress. And presently the maid appeared with a hot dish—young carp rolled in thin oatcakes and baked over a brasier. We were hungry and ate heartily.

James had continued in high spirits during the meal, full of pleasant plans for the future. "There is my son Reuel," he declared, "who has been ekeing out a living at basket-weaving, a hard and ill-paid trade. I shall send for him and Ruth, and they will keep the house and attend to the active business of

the farm; we shall be very happy."

But now his face darkened and he relapsed into a brooding silence; suddenly he burst out into vehement and bitter speech.

"But as for Mary," he shouted, "who has covered my grey head with the ashes of shame, she is no longer a daughter of mine; never shall she darken my door or sit at my fireside. Perchance the flames of Gehenna may be hot enough to cleanse her of her guilt; let her depart to her own place!" and he raised his hands as though about to call down the paternal curse of disownment. But Jesus interrupted him; quietly and steadily the Master was speaking: "A certain man," he began, "had two sons."

This the greatest story in the world! and time and again I have heard it. Yet always with those opening words, "A certain man had two sons," I feel once more the tingling thrill of expectancy with which I listened on this the first occasion of its telling; sitting on the porch of James's house, looking out on the quiet evening sky where hung the thin sickle of the new moon; the gracious presence of the Master at my side, the lovely cadence in his voice as he spoke those arresting words: "A certain man had two sons."

If there be any among you to whom the parable of the Prodigal Son is not an household word, let him turn to the Gospel according to Luke. For my present purpose, I am content to summarize the successive scenes in the drama: the selfish folly of the Younger Son and his departure into the far country, there to waste his substance in riotous living; the advent of evil days and the shame of his degradation, filling his belly with the husks that the swine did eat; the coming to himself, and the resolution to arise and return to that father whom he had so wronged and flouted.

"But when he was yet a great way off," continued Jesus, "his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son; make me as one of thy hired servants. But the father said to the servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found."

"A great way off!" repeats the Master, and his gaze travels outward on the road which leads from the lake. James and I also look; and there, toiling up the steep slope, comes the figure of a woman clothed all in grey; the last rays of the setting sun illumine her face—Mary of Magdala!

She who had been a sinner; now a fugitive and an outcast,

rejected by the great world in which she had ruled so long and so royally. With every hand and house closed against her, there was but one corner of the visible creation in which she might hope to hide her shame—her old home. But what if that last refuge were to be denied her, what if that one door were to remain forever closed against her knock? The countenance of James continues unrelenting, his brow wrinkled, and his lips set in an unyielding line. A dip in the road momentarily hides the form of the woman who walks so wearily.

"The father saw," again says Jesus. But James shakes his head. "I cannot—I will not," he mutters; his eyes seek the

floor and remain obstinately fixed there.

"And had compassion," continues the Master. James sobs

and hides his face in a corner of his robe.

"And had compassion, and ran—" And now it seems to me that the Master has risen to his feet and is striding swiftly through the violet and indigo-tinted shadows of the gathering dusk—the Eternal Father hastening to welcome his errant but

now returning child.

Never shall I know how the amazing transformation has come to pass; but suddenly I realized that it is Jesus and not James who is sitting beside me on the little porch. I look down the road. The snowy head-dress of the Master has vanished; or more properly, has been replaced by the burnous of faded blue which James ordinarily wears; as I gaze, he is running; the twin shapes of father and daughter meet and mingle into one.

Obeying the beckoning hand of the Master, I rise and follow him into a little grove of cypress across the road; there we wait.

The two pass by our hiding-place. Mary's countenance is pale, and athwart one cheek still runs the red mark of an unhealed wound; Lentulus, in his fury, had struck hard. But the face of James is transfigured, and I hear his voice, high and strong: "Bring forth the best robe * * * a ring * * * shoes * * * the fatted calf!" And then, rising to a triumphant crescendo, "Was dead, and is alive again * * * was lost, and is found!"

I give one last, backward glance. Already lights are beginning to twinkle about the house; servants are running to and fro; I hear the thin fluting of reeds, the twang of strings, the clash of cymbals; they begin to be merry.

As we retook the homeward road, I made full avowal of the part I had taken in the rehabilitation of James's farm. Having decided to follow Jesus of Nazareth, I found myself in possession

of a considerable store of money which I had laid by for the purchase of classical and philosophical manuscripts. For these I should now have no use, but the funds might be employed in making somebody happy. I had seen the wretched house and barren fields of James, for we had stopped overnight at the farm after our departure from Cana. So it had pleased me to play the rôle of a benevolent genie. The secret had been well kept, and I had revealed it to no one up to the present moment. But the Master had understood as he understands everything.

"And there is the Sermon on the Mount," I ended confidently. "Thy very words: 'Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: that thine alms may be in secret."

Jesus smiled and finished the quotation: "And thy Father

which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly."

Never shall I forget that journey back to Capernaum. For the very first time I was alone with the Master, walking with Jesus through the dewy twilight; Orion and his seven stars overhead; under our feet the fragrance of the wild thyme and of the purple sage. And as we went, he talked with me as one talks to a chosen friend, drawing the theme of his discourse from the familiar sights and sounds of the countryside. Here was a shepherd engaged in folding his flock for the night. And Jesus said:

"Verily, verily I say unto you, * * * I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. * * * He that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice; and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out, * * * and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice. And a stranger will they not follow * * * for they know not the voice of strangers. * * * Verily, verily I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep, * * * by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture. * * * And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd."

A little distance on and we passed a vineyard where the green globules were just beginning to be flushed with the purple

of autumn. And Jesus said:

"I am the vine * * * ye are the branches. * * * Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it that it may bring forth more fruit. * * * As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, * * * no more can ye, except ye abide in me."

Still farther along the way and we came to a property which appeared to be the estate of some wealthy nobleman. It was surrounded by a massive wall whose top was overhung by the richly burdened boughs of apple and plum trees. The wall was too high to look over, but the air was laden with the scent of night-blooming flowers, and the attentive ear could catch the musical tinkle of flowing fountains of water; here must be a veritable paradise. There was no breach in the wall, entrance being afforded solely by a door of oak, substantially built and painted a delectable green. And Jesus said:

"Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will

sup with him, and he with me."

Beautiful words, confident words! And I could find it in my heart to love him who uttered them so beautifully and so confidently. Never again could I voice that contemptuous query: "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?"

Ah, but he may demand something more of me than friend-ship or service or even love. He may want me—the whole of me. And so he stands at the door and knocks—only knocks, for he will never seek to force that door. Am I ready to let him in? Am I prepared to admit these lofty claims, and so find in Jesus of Nazareth the one Good Shepherd, the only true Vine, the single Door through which one may go in and out, and find pasture? I try to speak, but something clutches at my throat and seals my lips. Jesus looks at me, but he has no further word to say; we walk on.

A week later I encountered James in the Capernaum market-place; he had come to rejoin the Master and our company. "Why should you look so surprised, Bar-Talmai?" he asked. "Have you forgotten my lowly estate when Jesus took me by the hand and raised me up—me a broken man; worse than childless, poor in both body and spirit. And now that I have children and lands and all good things—barns filled with harvest, presses overrunning with oil and wine, silver in my purse and gold in my strong-box—shall I continue to sit at ease, unmindful of him who has not where to lay his head? How could I ever be happy if, after having known the Master, heard his words, and seen his mighty works, I should again be separated from him. And so I have come back."

James went on to tell me that Reuel and his wife Ruth had arrived at the farm, and were now in full possession of its manifold activities. Mary, too, would remain, and the young couple

seemed glad to have her with them. "Moreover, I have a fancy that they will all be happier in my absence than in my presence," he concluded shrewdly. "For I am an old man and a difficult one; perhaps it is only Jesus who can put up with my whims and crotchets." Whereupon James went away to find the Master.

Simon the Pharisee was making a great feast to his friends in his fine new house at Capernaum. Hananiah, of course, would be there, and Joel, together with several doctors of the Law who had come down from Jerusalem. And, somewhat surprisingly, Jesus had been invited; also Philip and myself as representing the more socially placed element in the Master's following. But when we arrived, no attention was paid to us as regards the ordinary rites of hospitality, and we were obliged to fend for ourselves. Not that I cared a whit for my own dignity, but I felt annoyed at Simon's arrogance in thus pointedly ignoring the Master; was he making of Jesus merely a feature in the entertainment provided for the guests of honour?

Finally we sat down to the meal, and I noticed that the strangers were especially interested in observing Jesus, this fearless young rabbi who had come, as it were, to cast fire upon the earth with his disturbing doctrines and inexplicable works. But Simon kept the discussions in safe channels; he was always the

prudent man.

The dining-room was open to the forecourt which, in turn, gave upon the public thoroughfare. Since no porter was in attendance, it was a simple matter for anyone to enter the apartment from the street. Suddenly a woman entered and went straight to the couch where Jesus was reclining, his feet stretched outward from the table. She was dressed in a robe of coarse blue homespun, with her long hair lying unbound upon her shoulders; Mary of Magdala, the woman who had been a sinner, and whose unsavoury fame was known to everyone present.

In her hand Mary carried a carved flask of alabaster filled with a costly perfume. She stood for a moment or two at the end of the couch, the tears running down her disfigured cheek and dropping on the Master's feet. Then, kneeling, she dried the moisture with her flowing hair; and, after kissing the feet of Jesus again and again, she poured the scent upon them. And

all the time she continued to weep.

The company looked on in scandalized silence, except Simon who could not wholly contain himself. "This man," he mut-

tered, "if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him: for she is a sinner."

The other guests stirred uncomfortably, but Jesus was quick to sense the sneer in Simon's whisper, and quick to answer it. "Simon," he said, "I have somewhat to say unto thee." The Pharisee dropped his eyes. "Say on," he assented curtly.

"There was a certain creditor," continued the Master, "which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most?"

Evidently Simon suspected a logical trap, but he was obliged to make answer. And so, after a visible hesitation, he replied:

"I suppose that he, to whom he forgave most."

"Thou hath rightly judged," agreed Jesus. Then, turning to Mary, he went on, saying: "Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she has washed my feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss, but this woman since I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. Whereupon I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little." Once more he addressed himself directly to the Magdalene. "Thy sins are forgiven," said Jesus.

Simon flushed, but Joel spoke up excitedly. "Who is this," he shouted, "that forgiveth sins also!" There were dark looks exchanged between the guests, and the doctors from Jerusalem sat in stiff, offended dignity. But the Master paid them not the smallest attention. "Thy faith," he said to Mary, "hath saved

thee; go in peace."

The meal went on, but with an air of constraint. Presently a servant entered, and announced that the mother and brethren of Jesus were without and desirous of speaking to him. I glanced up to recognize Mary the widow of Joseph together with Elder Brother James, Joses, Simon, and the two daughters. They were still standing in the street, but their faces were plainly visible above the low parapet of the forecourt. Jude was not with the family group, but remained in the background surrounded by the other members of the Twelve.

Simon scowled. However, his grandiose function had already been spoiled by the intrusion of Mary of Magdala; he

nodded ungracious permission.

But the Master interposed. "Who is my mother? and who are my brethren?" he asked. He glanced at Philip and me, and then stretched out his hand towards the little group of the other disciples. "Behold my mother and my brethren!" he continued. "For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother."

The eyes of the Blessed Mother were dim with tears as she looked appealingly at her son. She said no word, but Elder Brother James growled out: "He is beside himself!" Jesus remained silent. The questioning faces beyond the forecourt became indistinguishable in the gathering dusk.

The host rose, signifying that the formal part of the entertainment had been concluded; followed by Hananiah, Joel, and the ecclesiastical dignitaries from the Holy City, he led the way to

the upper guest chamber.

The great feast of Simon the Pharisee was at an end.

XIII

"MY NAME IS LEGION"

LITTLE ship resting on the gently heaving bosom of the Sea of Galilee. It had been a long, an exhausting day for the Master. From far and near the people had come to wait upon the new prophet, to hear his teaching, to seek the touch of his healing hand. Carried away by the enthusiasm, many had avowed their desire to become his disciples. "Master," shouted a young man whose dress proclaimed that he was a scribe by profession, "I will follow thee withersoever thou goest." Jesus answered him quietly: "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests: but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." Immediately the youth melted back into the crowd; manifestly he had no stomach for such high endeavour. Another man, middle-aged and apparently very much in earnest, had a request to make. "Lord," he said, "suffer me first to go and bury my father." And to him Jesus made answer: "Let the dead bury their dead; follow thou me." Whereupon the would-be disciple turned on his heel, and we saw him no more. Plainly, in the service of the Master, it was to be all or nothing, and the temper of the multitude perceptibly cooled; there was a general impulse

The sun was declining in the western sky—the "first evening," in Jewish popular speech. Peter's new fishing-boat lay at anchor in the little horseshoe-shaped bay, and Jesus signified his desire of crossing to the other side of the lake. The Master, being weary from the toil of the day, retired to the stern sheets and lay down upon a long cushion that covered the transverse locker. James Minor solicitously threw a rug over the feet of Jesus, and continued to crouch near him. Andrew, as usual, took the helm, the sail was hoisted, and the ship glided forth into the deep.

among the auditors toward departure, and soon we were alone.

The day had been hot and the breeze was slackening with the approach of sunset. But there was a refreshing coolness in the evening damp and we were content to sit quietly, conversing in subdued tones so that the Master's rest should not be disturbed; almost imperceptibly the boat increased its offing from the west-

ern shore until it was now in the middle of the lake. The few attending vessels which had put out with us had long since made

their way back to port.

Landlocked waters are subject to sudden and violent atmospheric changes, and the Sea of Galilee is peculiarly exposed to this hazard on account of the lofty rampart of hills on the northwest, veritable funnels through which vast currents of chilled air from the slopes of snowy Hermon pour down into the heated depression of the Jordan valley. I noticed that Andrew frequently glanced back over his left shoulder as though sensing a possible shift of weather.

It came with breath-taking suddenness. A little cloud appeared between the Horns of Hattin and rapidly increased in volume and density. Its blackness was accentuated by flashes of greenish-hued lightning, while gusty puffs caused our little craft to careen at an uncomfortable angle; yes, there was weight in

that wind and the storm was already upon us.

Andrew was too good a seaman to be taken unawares and at once he ordered the sail to be lowered, so that its area might be reduced to a safe working canvas. But an unforeseen contingency developed. The downhaul jammed, and before it could be cleared the squall, advancing at a terrific rate of speed, swept down upon the ship. In another instant we should have been upon our beam-ends, but fortunately the mast could not stand the strain and it snapped like a dry mullein stalk just above the stepping; the wildly threshing sail went overboard. Simon Peter had his axe in hand and quickly severed the tangle of wreckage, thereby relieving the vessel of the dead weight of spars and top-hamper; the latter drifted away to leeward and was lost to sight in the gathering murk.

"Oars!" shouted Andrew, for the boat lay in the trough of

the waves and water was pouring over the gunwales.

The ship was fitted with two sets of stout thole-pins on either side, and already Peter and James Major were labouring at the bow oars while Philip and Jude manned the pair amidships. Crack! and Peter's oar broke under his mighty thrust. Simon reached for the spare oar lashed under the thwarts. But it was too late; Peter flung the useless handle after the floating blade, and, deprived of his assistance, the strength of the other rowers was insufficient to bring the boat head on to the wind and, as Mark graphically relates, "the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full."

It is a fearsome thing to be suddenly confronted with a great peril. Only a moment ago and we had been in comparative security. It is true that a storm had arisen, but we were used to heavy weather on our Galilæan sea and, under ordinary circumstances, we should have ridden it out with no great danger of mischance. But now I felt my heart contract as though an icy hand had gripped it. What?—to die! and in the full flush of young manhood! For no man, however strong a swimmer he might be, could hope to wrestle against the mountainous waves; it would be a struggle, a swift weakening of vital powers, and then unconsciousness and the inevitable end. A couple of earthenware bowls with which to bale—how useless! I sank down upon the bottom-boards, wondering how long it would be before the ship would sink beneath us; now the candle of life was flickering wildly; soon it would be extinguished altogether.

Judas Iscariot, white-faced and shaking, was crawling towards the stern of the ship. "Jesus!" he shrieked. James the Less put his finger to his lips and shook his head; could not Judas see that the Master was asleep, that his rest must not be broken? Then Simon Peter added his stentorian voice. "Master!" he cried. "Carest thou not that we perish?" and his appeal was echoed

by the other disciples.

Awaking from slumber, the Master rose to his feet. The vessel was now so water-logged that it had no perceptible motion; it lay like a dead thing upon the sea, on the very verge of descending into the abyss. Majestically Jesus raised his hand. "Peace, be still!" he said. Immediately the force went out of the gale, the waves lost their foaming crests, and there was a great calm. The Master looked upon us rebukingly. "Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?" he asked.

How swift is the reaction from the depths of despair to the heights of joyful assurance. Simultaneously Simon Peter and Philip seized upon the pottery vessels and began to bale; soon the dangerous weight of water was expelled and the boat rose to her sailing marks; we were safe! But the awe of our late ordeal still rested upon our spirits; whispered ejaculations were exchanged, and Thomas seemed to voice the universal conviction when he muttered to Matthew: "What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?"

Under a windless, star-studded vault of sky the use of the oars was resumed. Presently we fetched the lights of the fishing village of Gergese in the country of the Gadarenes, and, an hour later, our keel ploughed into the shingle of its shelving beach.

What had happened? Jesus had spoken and his word had stilled the tempest. But what tempest? The welter of insensate

winds and waves, or that of unreasoning fear in us weak men? Matthew, Mark, and Luke plainly assert and unquestionably believe that the Master's rebuke was addressed to the actual storm. But is it not conceivable that he was equally cognizant of that tumult of human emotion which both unduly magnified the conflict of the physical elements and rendered us impotent to contend against it. Or, to consider the event from the purely philosophical angle, if it be true that storms on our Galilean lake often end as suddenly as they begin, had the Master merely seized upon the opportune moment to exact an obedience already accorded in the course of nature? Be that as it may this had been the voice of an authority to which all things in heaven and earth and under the earth must bow and obey. The figment of a dream, a troubled dream? Ah! but the one incontrovertible reality remained—Jesus, the eternal rock rising out of the sea of elemental strife and human passions; Jesus, master of himself and of men.

It was after midnight when we landed and the houses in the village were dark; therefore we should have to make shift for ourselves if we were to obtain any rest. Fortunately the night was warm, we had our rugs, and the grass growing in the crevices of the rocks was both thick and abundant; soon we were asleep.

I awoke with the premonition that some evil thing was close at hand. The dying moon lit up a weird scene—the sad, leopard-coloured cliffs of the shore, honeycombed by innumerable caves formed by the action of water on the limestone rock. And I knew that these caverns bore an unpleasant reputation. Many of them were utilized as tombs, while others gave refuge to lepers and criminals and similar outcasts from society.

Standing motionless on the foreshore and looking out to sea was the Master; in the half-light I could barely make out two figures approaching him. But presently one of them seemed to lose courage and, skulking back in the deeper shadows, was seen no more. The other came on steadily, speaking no word, his naked feet making no sound on the surface of the boulder-strewn beach.

A dreadful creature this: a man of gigantic stature, entirely unclothed, his lean body crisscrossed with black and red scars, his hair shaggy and matted, his eyes smouldering with an implacable ferocity. I realized instantly that this must be a demoniac; a man possessed by an unclean spirit, to use the popular expression. Doubtless he had become a terror to the entire countryside, and all efforts to restrain him had been futile, as was shown by the fragments of a broken chain about his waist and

the several links of an iron fetter still attached to one of his wrists. No longer a man, but a wild beast, or rather the companion of devils; who dwelt among the tombs; so exceeding fierce that none durst pass that way, while women stopped their ears and children whimpered to hear him night and day upon the mountains, crying and cutting himself with stones.

There was a rough voice in my ear. "The Master may not have seen," whispered Simon Zelotes; "we had better make

ready." He fingered his dagger suggestively.

But there was no fear lest Jesus might be taken unawares; long before the visitor had come within arm's length the Master had turned and was regarding him intently. Nor did it appear that the poor creature had contemplated any act of violence. "Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit," Jesus commanded. Whereupon the lunatick, with a great clashing of his chains and fetter-links, fell to his knees before the Master, and worshipped him, crying out with a loud voice: "What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God most high? I beseech thee, torment me not."

"What is thy name?" asked Jesus.

"My name," answered the demoniac, "is Legion: for we are

many."

It was an amazing scene, and I was following its every detail with an intense interest. For while belief in demoniac possession is common among the vulgar-minded, and also accepted to a degree by dabblers in the mystic cults, it was wholly foreign to my inherited convictions. As a Sadducean, I must deny the resurrection from the dead, and therefore I could not postulate the conception of disembodied spirits seeking to regain a foothold in the world of physical matter. And yet as I looked at this wretched man it did seem as though he were under the domination of a will other than his own; his very speech was laboured and unnatural, suggesting that he might be acting as the mere mouthpiece of some alien personality. Perplexing enough, but the drama was not yet concluded; a still stranger thing was to happen.

Speaking in those strained, mechanical tones, "Legion" be-sought the Master not to banish "him" from the country, thereby forcing "him" to return to the "deep," that abyss of chill and bloodless phantoms in the world of spirits. And, at this very moment, I chanced to glance up a little ravine, and so caught sight of an elevated plateau to which a large herd of swine had just been driven from the neighbouring village of Gergesa. Here were copses of hazel and groves of carob trees

affording food for the animals, and doubtless succulent roots could be had for the digging; it was a swinish paradise. "Legion" also saw the swine. "Suffer us to enter into them," was "his" appeal. And then, as though taking the Master's permission for granted, the unclean spirit departed from the man, leaving him spent and breathless. Instantly it was apparent that the animals had been seized with a strange agitation; they milled about excitedly, resisting all efforts of the swineherds to control them. In a compact body they dashed towards the highest part of the cliff where the descent is precipitous and the foreshore nothing more than a mere strip of sand between the rock-wall and the lake. Urged on by terror, the swine crowded over the edge of the declivity and plunged into the water which at this point is deep and with a strong current. Now the swine is an awkward swimmer, and it is not unusual for one of these animals, in its efforts to keep afloat, to cut its own throat with its sharp-pointed hooves. And so the whole herd (numbering about two thousand, according to Mark) was destroyed in a very short time, a shocking spectacle. The swineherds, who had stood by helplessly during the progress of the tragedy, rushed away to convey the dolorous news to the owners of the animals; doubtless they were Greeks who found a profit in supplying the cities of the Decapolis with the flesh of these unclean beasts.

The full dawn had come. Simon Peter and Andrew went into the town to obtain material for refitting their boat, and Judas Iscariot accompanied them to purchase some simple provision for the breaking of our fast. I looked at the man who had been possessed by the unclean spirit. John had brought from the ship a spare robe with which to cover his nakedness, and had conducted him to a near-by spring where he might cleanse himself from the grime and filth of his long sojourn among the tombs. Now he was in company with the Master who talked to him earnestly. I could not hear what passed between them, but assuredly the poor creature was now in full possession of his senses,

quiet and at peace.

I walked away, meditating earnestly. Of a truth, this man had been in very evil case, and now I beheld him clothed and in his right mind, restored to the world of normal men, sitting at

the feet of Jesus. What had happened?

Let us grant for argument's sake that the legion of devils, having departed from their victim at the Master's word, had actually entered into the bodies of the swine, in order to avoid the necessity of returning to their own place—the dreaded "deep." Why then had these demons immediately proceeded to destroy

their new houses of refuge, thereby again rendering themselves

homeless? What egregious stupidity!

I recall a conversation upon this subject of demoniac possession with Crito, one of my Athenian masters and a man of singular penetration and judgment. Crito firmly believed in another plane of existence through which wander the discarnate spirits of wicked men eager to return to earth and its sensual pleasures. Now, according to Crito, they can do so only in the event of their being given the opportunity of entering the body of a living man. But between the two worlds rises a protective wall which the demons cannot pass.

"Then the theory of demoniac possession is untenable," I im-

mediately pointed out.

"It would be so," assented Crito, "except for one thing—it is always possible to make a breach in that wall from our side. Hence the warning in your sacred books against communion with familiar spirits. Intercourse is practicable, but it is fraught with danger, terrible danger. Remember King Saul and the witch of Endor."

"Quite reasonable," I agreed.

"Imagine," continued Crito, "a living man who has given full rein to all his sensual passions, and who seeks to plumb new depths of wickedness. He knows that there exist disembodied spirits who are wholly evil, but he alone can take the first step of communicating with them. And so he begins to tear down that protecting wall, stone by stone; with infinite care but with inflexible determination.

"Conceive that supreme moment when in the warm, well lighted chamber of his soul the reckless adventurer awaits the coming of his visitor from the unseen world. The wall has been breached clean through to the other side, the way is wholly open. Suddenly a current of icy air begins to blow; the man is conscious that something is about to enter—the spirit of absolute evil. A qualm seizes him; alive at last to the folly of his course, the man springs to his feet intent upon closing that fatal breach. Too late! the visitor is in the room, and there he will remain forever, the master of that wretched man, the ruler of his very soul. For there is no earthly power which can deliver one possessed of an unclean spirit."

Such had been Crito's reasoning, and if the initial postulate of survival after death be admitted, it seems sufficiently logical. The comforting assurance follows that no one need fear being possessed by devils unless he himself elects to open the door to their approach. Many years later Elder Brother James was to

establish this same principle in his Epistle General: "Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed."

But there remained two points not covered in Crito's argument. With my own eyes I had witnessed a greater power in operation than that of devils; Jesus had commanded "Legion" to come out of the man, and the order had been obeyed.

Secondly, the unclean spirits could not continue in the bodies of the swine, since the animals refused hospitality to these uninvited guests, preferring death to a domination so loathsome. Surely, if this could be true of a swine, the very symbol of impurity in our Levitical code, man created in the Almighty's image may be very sure that his bodily temple is not to be invaded against his wish and will. Yes, the issue remains in man's own hands; only Alexander can conquer Alexander.

Hardly had the sun attained its full strength than we had visitors; the owners of the herd of swine which had perished in the sea presented themselves. They were angry, confused in mind, and anxious lest they should suffer further losses; they besought Jesus that he should depart out of their coasts. The Master, knowing that his ministry and teaching could not be acceptable, at least for the time being, to these Gadarenes, assented: whereupon the protestants expressed their satisfaction and went their way. For the first time in recorded history, man had been given his choice—the company of Jesus and that of the swine. And he had preferred the swine! The first, but—ah, the pity of it!—not the last time that he should so elect.

A favouring wind and a smooth sea made the homeward journey pleasantly uneventful, and shortly after noon we were again at Capernaum.

A number of people had gathered at the landing stage. One of them ran forward to meet the Master, and fell at his feet. "My little daughter," he sobbed out, "lieth at the point of death: I pray thee, come and lay thy hand on her, that she may be healed; and she shall live."

Jesus was still wearied after the trying events of his broken night, but he could not resist this appeal. Jairus, the father, was an upright man and one of the rulers of the synagogue at Capernaum; and doubtless the daughter was also known to Jesus, since the Master, wherever he went, made friends so readily with children. The disciples followed, together with much people, so that the narrow street became jammed with the eager throng.

Now there was one figure in the crowd, anxious to escape observation and yet persistently pushing forward, seeking to approach the person of the Master; a poorly dressed woman with the lines of ill health deeply graven in her face. None of us ever learned her name or condition in life, but Matthew, Mark, and Luke all agree that she had suffered for twelve years with an issue of blood of which no physician could cure her, although she had consulted many skilled in medicine, and had spent all her living without being bettered; rather she had grown worse. And when, one day, she heard of this new wonder-worker, she had journeyed to Capernaum, and she had waited all night for his return from Gergesa. Yet, when the Master finally appeared, she found neither the opportunity nor the courage to approach him. Jairus had made his plea and it had been granted; all that this poor woman could do was to mingle with the crowd and follow, hoping against hope. But as she trudged along, ready to drop with fatigue and disappointment, a wonderful thought occurred to her: "If I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole." Instantly a new hope and confidence possessed her; little by little she wormed her way through the press until she had come within arm's length of Jesus. Now she must act promptly, for at any moment she might be jostled aside and, perhaps, find it impossible to regain her position. Leaning down, she placed her finger tips on the hem of the Master's robe. And even as she did so a thrill ran through her body; the issue of blood was stopped, and a returning tide of vitality flooded her whole being; she had been healed of her plague! She stood there trembling and amazed.

But the Master had stopped short. "Who touched me?" he

asked

It seemed an incredible inquiry with the people from all sides crowding so closely upon him; what could Jesus mean? Peter took it upon himself to answer for the others. "Master," he said, "the multitude throng thee and press thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me?" But Jesus persisted. "Somebody," he reiterated, "hath touched me: for I perceive that virtue is gone out of me."

The woman, trembling and yet joyfully conscious of her great deliverance, came forward, fell at the Master's feet, and declared the truth before us all: how she had dared to touch the hem of his garment, and thereupon had been healed of her infirmity.

The Master put forth his hand and raised her up. "Daughter," he said, "be of good comfort, thy faith hath made thee

whole; go in peace."

Another work of wonder!

Of all the people who thronged Jesus on that memorable day, there was only one who had really touched him. And to that one alone was vouchsafed health and salvation.

Is it to be otherwise in the days that are to come? Many shall there be who will endeavour to throng Jesus, who will seek to enter his presence, who will walk with him on the highway, who will worship in his temples, who will even promise to feed upon him in that rite instituted as a perpetual memory of that his precious death and sacrifice until his coming again. And yet fail to touch him! And so never to hear from his lips that exceeding comfortable word: "Thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace."

Hardly had our progress been resumed than again it was interrupted. A servant came running from the house of Jairus with a sorrowful message: "Thy daughter is dead," he cried out, "why troublest thou the Master any further?" Jairus stood there, a stricken man. But Jesus was prompt to reassure him. "Be not afraid," he said, "only believe."

Within the ruler's house a crowd had gathered—mourning women, a company of minstrels with their instruments. There was the sound of weeping and wailing, while the shrill piping of reeds and the brazen blare of trumpets added to the discordant tumult.

Jesus looked with disapproval upon this scene of noisy confusion. "Why make ye this ado?" he protested. "The damsel is not dead, but sleepeth." There were murmurs of dissent, and some laughed scornfully; they knew full well that the maiden was beyond all human aid.

The Master took decisive measures, ordering the house to be cleared. Then, accompanied by the father and mother of the dead child, together with Simon Peter, James Major, and John, he passed into the inner room. The rest of us waited, uncertain

of what was to happen.

On a low couch lay the maid, to all appearance cold and lifeless. Jesus took her by the hand. "Talitha (my little lamb),"—he spoke gently but commandingly—"I say unto thee, arise." Straightway the girl rose to her feet and, being upward of twelve years of age, walked to the outstretched arms of her parents. Whereupon, as Mark relates, "they were astonished with a great astonishment. And he charged them straitly that no man should know it; and commanded that something should be given her to eat."

Once again I felt keen regret that Luke, the Beloved Physician, had not been an eye witness of this heartshaking scene. He had suggested to me that the son of the widow of Nain had been in a catalyptic trance and not actually dead; and this hypothesis in the case of the daughter of Jairus seemed even stronger. Had not Jesus himself said: "Weep not; she is not dead, but sleepeth"? Moreover, when the damsel had awakened to conscious life, the Master had broken the tension of the moment by enjoining that meat should be given her—how eminently practical and sensible! And, finally, had he not charged the parents that no one should know what had happened?

All very true, and yet one certainty remains. Whether or not dissolution had actually taken place, assuredly the soul of the child had been hovering on the confines of the grey, unpeopled world. What if Jesus had not been present? What if his voice had not penetrated into that dark void, recalling her wandering spirit to the world of living men? There on the couch she lay, momentarily sinking deeper and deeper into the abyss of discarnate personality. Then he had spoken, and she had answered to his call. Truly our Master had once again, and unmistakably, proved himself the Lord of the life more abundant.

XIV

THE MISSION OF THE TWELVE

P to this time the ministry of the Master to his countrymen of Galilee had been astonishingly successful. But now clouds were gathering in the hitherto serene sky. On a recent Sabbath, Jesus had taught the people, as usual, in the synagogue. At the conclusion of his discourse an uneasiness was plainly evident among the hearers; without doubt, the hostility of the official religionists was beginning to make itself felt. Now there was an open outbreak. A powerfully built man, whose deeply-lined face betokened a fanatical mind, rose in his place and shouted out: "Whence hath this man this wisdom, and these mighty works? Is not this the carpenter's son? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Jude? And his sisters, are they not with us? Whence then hath this man all these things?"

Jesus attempted no defence, saying simply: "A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country, and in his own house."

Yes, the tide had definitely turned against the Master; as Matthew puts it, "They were offended in him." And because of their unbelief, Jesus could do there no mighty work; his own city had rejected him, and he was forced to go into the neighbouring towns and villages, preaching the Gospel of the kingdom of God, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. Poor and scattered abroad were they, as sheep without a shepherd, and the Master's compassionate heart was deeply moved.

The Master has come to a decision. We, his disciples, are to go out on a special ministry to carry on the work of the kingdom. Bidding us follow him to a secluded spot on the lake-shore, he proceeded to give us our commission and instructions. We are to start upon our journey carrying nothing but a staff. We are to put no gold or silver in our wallets; we are to make no provision of bread, and we are not to burden ourselves with two coats nor even a spare pair of shoon.

May I confess frankly that my heart sank as I listened. To

employ the Master's own image, he was sending us out as sheep in the midst of wolves; and we were not allowed even ordinary maintenance for the exigencies of the journey, exigencies that must surely arise. Outside of a staff—absolutely nothing. What could be more foolhardy!

Then followed a breath-taking announcement. After all, we were to carry something with us, although it would not be of our own providing. And this something was to be an endowment of the Master's peculiar power over the hearts and lives of men, a portion of his own all-conquering spirit. To recall his very words: "As ye go preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils; freely ye have received, freely give."

Sitting in a semicircle on the short-cropped grass, we listen as the Master proceeds to give us further injunctions. We are not to enter Gentile or Samaritan territory; our embassy is to be confined strictly to our fellow-countrymen, the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Upon arriving at a town or village, we are to present ourselves at the principal house with a request for food and lodging. If hospitality be accorded, our peace is to rest upon that dwelling; if denied, the blessing is to remain with us until bestowed in some more worthy quarter.

"Be * * * wise as serpents, and harmless as doves," continues the Master. "And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved. * * The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord. * * It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. * * * And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul. * * * And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it."

The final details were quickly settled. We were to go forth in six parties of two men each, and the Master himself designated the pairings. Simon Peter and Andrew, John and James Major would naturally travel in company. Nor was it surprising that Thomas and Matthew should compose a third couple, since a strong friendship had grown up between the two men. James Minor, old and infirm, would be given the companionship of Philip, the most alert and resourceful of us all. So far, so good, although I was somewhat astonished that Jude should be paired with Simon Zelotes. But Jesus had a peculiar tenderness for the only one among his reputed brethren who had elected to

follow him, and it was his evident intention to provide Jude with an able and fearless coadjutor. And then it suddenly dawned upon me that this arrangement would leave me partnered with Judas Iscariot. For the first and only time I felt a disinclination to comply with the Master's wishes. I had a secret distaste for this man of dark and often violent moods, and I doubted if my aversion would yield to a closer acquaintanceship. But a glance at Judas made me aware that the Iscariot was not only content with the situation; he actually welcomed it. Accordingly I signified my assent; moreover, Jesus had wished it, and that should be enough for me.

The midday meal had been concluded, and since we had no preparations of any sort to make, the mission was to proceed without further delay. Together we repeated the "Our Father," that form of prayer which Jesus himself had instituted; then kneeling we received the Master's blessing through the laying on of hands.* And thereupon we took up our several lines of march. I looked back as I topped the first ridge. Jesus stood alone, his hands clasped as though in prayer, while around his head, outlined against the disk of the sun, there shone an aureole of golden glory.

The particular itinerary assigned to Judas and myself was to the northwest, in the general direction of Ramah, and through a hilly and sparsely settled region. As I have already related, our *impedimenta* was to be strictly limited—nothing but a staff. Since I seldom employed this primitive aid to locomotion, I carried nothing at all. Judas, however, insisted upon searching the first coppice we encountered until he had found and cut what he wanted—an ash-plant still encased in its greenish bark, its size and weight making it a formidable weapon. "Now I shall be ready for whatever we may meet—man, beast, or devil," he announced, twirling the cudgel about his head in a vigorous flourish.

The weather was clear and cool; and, despite the roughness of the path, we made good progress. Judas was in high spirits—like a boy let out of school. He chattered incessantly, and even ventured upon a series of discordant sounds which may have

^{*}The imposition of hands! But this was a prerogative belonging to the Master alone; during the entire period that we accompanied Jesus of Nazareth no one of us ever ventured to lay even a finger upon His august Body. Not that such familiarity was discouraged, still less forbidden; it simply continued to be unthinkable.

passed with him for a song. I, for the most part, plodded on in silence.

Towards the hour of sunset we reached the outskirts of a hamlet consisting of half a score or so of houses. By the side of the road was a country smithy set up in the shadow of a mighty oak, comparable in girth and spread of branch to the historic terebinth of our Father Abraham at Mamre.

The smith, stripped naked to the waist, stood at his anvil engaged in fashioning a great hook; the sparks flew in showers from the glowing iron as it took shape under successive blows from his primitive hammer, a lump of ore fastened by withes of green osier to a stout handle. I noticed with interest one physical peculiarity of the man. With ordinary human beings, the armpits are hollow; in his case, the space under the shoulder-blades was filled solidly with a mass of fibrous muscle and sinew; here, in truth, was a veritable colossus. Mindful of our instruction to make inquiry as to the chief house in the village, Judas hailed the man; he glowered at us and continued his task without

deigning to reply.

The temper of Judas, always brittle, mounted instantly to the breaking point. Stepping up to the surly artificer, Judas overturned the anvil by a blow from his sandalled foot, and repeated his question. The smith, flushing redly, whirled aloft his ponderous hammer; but a thrust from the ash-plant landed fairly on the point of his jaw and stretched him prostrate on the clinker-strewn floor of the smithy, his bare shoulder coming into contact with the heated iron of the half-completed work. With a yell of pain, the smith rose and rushed to the conflict; clinched in close embrace, the two men threshed about wildly. The Galilæan was probably superior in pure muscular strength, but Judas had a trick of fence which speedily gave him the advantage. I could not see how it was done, but now the Iscariot had his adversary's right arm in a peculiar, vise-like grip; the more violently the man struggled, the more certain it became that his own strength would defeat him through the certain snapping of the bone in his forearm; the leverage was both relentless and irresistible. With a grunt, the smith allowed his muscles to relax. "Enough!" he growled. "You are the better man." antagonists drew apart, and stood breathing heavily.

In spite of his initial truculence, the smith, Ehud by name, now showed himself surprisingly amenable. No one in that part of the country had ever been able to match him in physical prowess, and he respected this stranger who had stood up to him as man to man. Moreover, having learned at last the purpose of

our visit, he insisted upon our accepting his hospitality for the night. "And perhaps you will teach me that trick," he added.

"Perhaps," assented Judas. "I learned it from an Egyptian

wrestler, and it has beaten many a good man."

Judas and I assisted in restoring the smithy and its contents to some sort of order, and, after extinguishing the embers of his forge fire, Ehud invited us to follow him. But Judas, who had been rummaging among the odds and ends of the smithy, made occasion for a momentary delay. "Do you know what this is, Bar-Talmai?" he asked, holding up a curious-looking contrivance made of iron and lead. I did recognize the tool, for it was nothing less than an old-fashioned piece of mechanism for pulling teeth, and known to me by its Greek name of odontogogue. It consisted of a massive jaw worked by a series of levers, and it was capable, in sheer power, of extracting the horn from the skull of a rhinoceros. A truly fearsome-appearing apparatus, and nowadays it has been superseded by the more humane instrument called an elevator or forceps. Ehud grinned. "It is part of my trade to pull teeth," he explained, "and I have yet to meet the jaw which can defy my little lamb's power of persuasion."

"Will you lend it to me overnight?" continued Judas, and Ehud nodded assent; no favour would he deny to this new-made friend whose cunning of fence had proved too much for his own mighty thews and sinews.

Trailing in Ehud's wake, I ventured on a mild remonstrance to the Iscariot. "We were to do no more than shake the dust off our feet against those who refuse to receive us," I reminded him.

"I shook off enough dust to choke me while we were milling about that smithy floor," retorted Judas. "Moreover, we were given a further injunction—that of casting out devils. You did not notice, I suppose, but I distinctly saw a little naked red demon popping out of Ehud's navel, and go slithering away among a pile of rubbish. It was a good job that I did, for here is Ehud now, as mild a mannered man as one could wish to meet. Yes, even the devils are subject unto us," he concluded with an air of profound gravity that sent me into a fit of half-suppressed laughter; fortunately my mirth did not carry to the somewhat dull ears of our host. "But what do you want with the odontogogue?" I whispered. "I may have use for it later on," evaded Judas.

After the mysterious fashion in which news travels in these remote rural districts, every one, within a score of miles, seemed to be aware of our arrival, and of our intimate association with Galilee's young rabbi and wonder-worker, Jesus of Nazareth. And so when we entered the tiny market-place, after the evening meal, we found it crowded with people from far and near. The headman of the village, a venerable patriarch with the longest and bushiest beard that ever I beheld, welcomed us cordially. "We have heard of your master," he said, "and we would know more of his doctrine. Tell us."

I cast an appealing glance at the Iscariot, but he evidently considered that he had already done his share of the day's work; edging away, Judas left me starkly alone, the centre of the interested group.

I am not a ready speaker, and the idea of facing even this rustic audience appalled me. Yet the Master's orders had been explicit; we were to preach the Gospel of the kingdom. How to

fulfill that obligation?

I have learned my lesson, the realization that Jesus imposes no task upon the obedient heart without giving the strength necessary to perform it. As I stood there, hesitating and embarrassed. I recalled the Master's own method—the setting forth of his doctrine through the medium of the little, homely stories which we call the parables. Again and again I had listened to these stories until now I could repeat them in the Master's own words. And so, very simply and slowly, I began to retell these parables to my audience of countryfolk—the kingdom of heaven likened to the draw-net full of fishes both good and bad, the tiny mustard seed growing into a great tree, the pearl of great price, the treasure hid in a field, the leaven leavening the whole lump of meal, the seed cast into the ground and growing there in secret. Eagerly the people listened; for we of the Orient are like children, ever receptive to the charm of a well-told tale, quick to grasp its inner meaning, fully alive to the beauty of its teaching. And when at last I paused in the recital, my hearers were still unsatisfied; I had to go on, drawing from the Master's treasurehouse those imperishable jewels: the story of the sower who went forth to sow, the lovely idyll of the lost sheep, the allegory of the house built upon a rock; and, finally—the cap-sheaf of that immortal harvesting-the story beginning: "A certain man had two sons."

It was late that night when the assembly dispersed and we were permitted to seek our couches. To my secret relief, none had sought to be healed of disease or to be relieved of physical infirmity; indeed, the whole region seemed extraordinarily healthful, there being even a marked absence of the eye troubles with which so many of our countrymen are afflicted. But, at an early

hour on the following morning, while we were preparing to leave Ehud's hospitable abode, a sound of wailing, high-pitched and incessant, fell upon our ears; and presently a woman appeared at the house door, dragging by the hand a half-grown boy whose tear-stained face bore eloquent witness of his physical discomfort. "It is an aching tooth," explained the woman, "and for two whole nights my little Jesse has not closed his eyes—nor his mouth. It has become unbearable for us all, and so I have brought my son to these worshipful strangers that they may re-

cover him of his grievous pain."

Instinctively I retreated into the background, but Judas stepped forward, alert and self-confident; here was the very chance for which he had been waiting. "To be sure I can heal him," said the Iscariot. "See here, my little man," and he drew from the bosom of his robe the formidable-appearing odontogogue. "Easy as the cracking of a nut," declared Judas as he proceeded to crush a walnut in the massive jaws of the instrument, working the levers with uncanny dexterity. The boy stopped crying instantly, and his eyes grew round with terror. Judas cast about and picked up a plank which had embedded in it a stout iron nail. "Watch now," he said as he applied the odontogogue; scrunch! and the nail came out with a rasping screech. "You see how easily it works," commented Judas smilingly. "Courage, my son! One little moment and all will be over and past." He seized the boy's arm, and invited him to open his mouth. But the child, breaking away, ran to the shelter of his mother's skirts. Judas frowned and endeavoured to recapture his patient. The woman, however, interposed. "I thank your honour," she said, "but it will not be necessary. Jesse tells me that his tooth has stopped aching."

Judas looked his disappointment. "You are sure?" he asked. "Indeed, sir," declared the boy, "it doesn't hurt me at all;

the pain is quite gone."

"Oh, very well," growled Judas, restoring the instrument of torture to his bosom. "That being the case, we'll say no more about it. You are cured—entirely and perfectly so?"

"Perfectly, perfectly," answered mother and son in unison. With renewed and voluble expression of thanks, they withdrew—

hastily.

After returning the *odontogogue* to Ehud, and taking our leave of him with many exchanges of cordial good-will, we resumed our journey.

"Not so bad," remarked Judas. "A devil cast out and a healing at the very first essay." I assented politely, but in private I

had my doubts; I could recall a similar incident in my own experience—the pain of an excruciating toothache miraculously subsiding at the mere entrance of the chirurgeon. Then, as we left the village, there came to my ears the unmistakable sounds of a child's suddenly renewed weeping. I smiled inwardly, but the Iscariot pretended to have noticed nothing. We walked on.

That same evening we encountered an old acquaintance—Ben-Ammon, one of John the Baptist's disciples, who had passed a night in our company at the inn near Nain a week or so ago.

He had a tragic story to tell us.

The Baptist is dead. It seems that King Herod had given a great feast in honour of his birthday, at the palace-fortress of Machærus; and, during the evening, Salome, daughter of Queen Herodias, had entertained the company with her celebrated Dance of the Seven Veils. In his drunken rapture Herod had promised to bestow upon Salome any reward it might please her to name. Whereupon the damsel had consulted her mother. Herodias, sensing that the moment for her long-meditated revenge upon the prophet had at last arrived, gave Salome her instructions. Returning to the banquet hall, Salome demanded to know if the King had been sincere in his offer. "To the half of my kingdom," answered Herod boastfully, for he was full of wine. "I will," continued the young woman, "that thou give me by and by in a charger the head of John the Baptist."

King Herod sobered instantly. Like all tyrants he was a coward, and he feared the consequences of such an act, since the people still accounted the Baptist as a prophet. Moreover, in his heart, Herod felt unwilling to lay hands of violence upon one whom he knew to be a just and holy man. Yet he had given his oath in the presence of his lords, high captains, and chief estates of Galilee. "The head of John the Baptist," insisted Salome;

and Herod, yielding, sent for the executioner.

There were a few moments of suspense. Herod sat gnawing at his beard, his forehead glistening with little beads of sweat. But Salome, true daughter of her wicked mother, stood proudly erect, radiant in her imperious young beauty, while behind the lattice in the women's gallery gleamed the hard, agate-like eyes of Ouesen Herodiese gleamed supported by

of Queen Herodias; gleamed expectantly.

The executioner reappeared. On a great silver platter lay the head of the prophet. Pale, but perfectly collected, Salome received the dreadful burden, and vanished behind the screen, bearing it to her tigress mother. The King motioned to the musicians, and the strains of lutes and harps smote the heavy silence.

Presently there was laughter and the renewed chatter of voices; the King drank long and deep.

That same night John's disciples came and took up the body.

Having buried it, they went and told Jesus.

And so the final chapter in John's great commission has been written. The prophet, who had come to prepare the way of the Lord, had himself gone the way of all flesh; the voice crying in the wilderness had been forever stilled. But his message of reproof and warning would remain in the hearts of men, and I recalled the Master's own words: "Verily, I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist."

For upwards of a fortnight our mission had taken us over many a rough mile and into a score of villages and hamlets. Always it had been the same procedure—the hearty welcome and hospitality, the throngs listening to the glad tidings of the kingdom of God now so near at hand. And it was ever my part to interpret that message, telling and retelling the familiar discourses and parables of Jesus. Judas took no part in this teaching, nor did he offer to assist in the ministry of healing so specifically enjoined upon us all. To my dismay, many sick and infirm folk did seek our aid, but somehow the Iscariot invariably managed to be out of sight and call on these occasions.

For me it was a severe ordeal. How could I, conscious of my own weakness and lack of faith, bring health and salvation to these poor sufferers? What an unworthy instrument was I to manifest the glory of the Master! All I could do was to obey his plain command—to lay my hands in blessing on the afflicted, bidding them to be sane and whole in the Name of Jesus of Naz-

With what result? Well, there were many who professed that they had been discharged of their infirmities. A certain proportion of these persons were, doubtless, victims of their own diseased imaginations; needing only confidence and a hopeful word to work out their own recovery. Others were plainly ill or visibly crippled; but here again I had no recourse but to fulfill the injunction of Jesus: "Heal the sick. * * * Freely ye have received, freely give."

Looking back through the mist of years, I realize full well that I, Nathanael Bar-Talmai, served only as the channel of the Master's grace abounding; mighty works may have been wrought by my hand, but the effectual agent was always the spirit and the

power of Jesus.

areth.

We were on the return journey and on its last lap. For several days Judas had seemed even more moody and depressed than was his wont; hardly a word was now exchanged between us. On this particular morning I was walking alone; Judas, having

pushed ahead, was entirely out of sight.

I heard it once more, that fearful cry to which I had listened in the sun-baked gorge of the Fly-god, and again on the scarred flank of Mount Ebal. I hurried forward. By the side of the road, in a clump of alder bushes, there was the nest of a quail; and although it was now autumn, a belated brood was in process of rearing. I saw the Iscariot tear the nest away and dash it to the ground; he then proceeded to trample its helpless inmates under his heavy sandals. The mother bird twittered forward in defence of her young. A blow from the ash-plant cudgel decapitated her.

Sick in body and mind, I looked at the Iscariot, the despoiler of this innocent home. The man was almost unrecognizable; his countenance livid, the eyeballs rolling wildly, the teeth grating together, the breathing noisy and laboured. And then, without a moment's warning, the agitated muscles relaxed, and he sank down amid the red ruin he had wrought; he slept like a child

tired of play.

I stood regarding him. Now I had often heard in my western travels of what the Greeks call the "sacred disease," or "falling sickness." Invariably there is little warning of what is to happen. The patient appears depressed, the attention wanders, the teeth clench, and the face grows pale; this is the aura, or precursor of the fit. Suddenly he is taken with a convulsive agitation, and a slaver of foam forms about the mouth; then issues that soul-and-body-dividing shriek of agony, to be shortly followed by complete unconsciousness. Strange as it may seem, the sick man is entirely oblivious of what seems to be his atrocious sufferings. Presently he revives, and his renewal of physical well-being is accompanied by a curious elation of spirits, an elation surpassing all other human sensations of pleasure; yes, even the ecstatic love of a bridegroom for his bride pales beside that potent peal of heavenly bells.

Long and deeply I reflected as I watched the still-sleeping man. Was this the true furor epilepticus; was Judas indeed a victim of that dread malady? Or were our eastern seers right in ascribing these terrific seizures to the direct agency of devils, demoniacal possession? I wondered, and then a new thought came to me: whatever may be the precise nature of this terrible affliction. Jesus possesses the power to cure it! Time and time

again I had witnessed the demonstration of that power—the physical disturbances abated, the wild spirit calmed, the sick man sitting, clothed and in his right mind, at the feet of the Master. Surely if Iesus could release from bondage the casual suppliant for mercy, he would never refuse succour to one of his own followers: Judas had but to ask. But would he do so? Was the Iscariot conscious of his bitter need, ready to lay help upon one who is mighty?

Half an hour later Judas opens his eyes, yawns, and sits up. He smiles as he explains that, feeling tired, he had indulged in a short nap. "But now," he continues, "I am a new man, ready for anything. What a glorious day! It is good to be alive in a world so beautiful and so happy! Shall we be on our way?" Jauntily he strides along; he even attempts a tuneless whistling. but my heart is heavy.

What I had feared has come to pass. I have had a long talk with Judas, telling him of what I have seen with my own eyesthe dramatic incident of the breaking of the "wilderness bread" at the gorge of the Fly-god, and the obscene sacrifice to Ashtoreth on the summit of Mount Ebal. The Iscariot listens, but his face remains hard as flint and he continues to be wholly incredulous. "I hear what you have to say, Bar-Talmai," he begins, "and, frankly, I disbelieve you. How could such things happen, and I know nothing of my own part in them? It is incredible!"

"But," I remind him, "there is visible evidence of your guilt in the destruction of the quail's nest. Look at your shoon and

garments, both stained with the blood of your victims."

"I remember being seized with giddiness as I walked," he concedes grudgingly. "It is possible that I stumbled and fella pure accident. What fault of mine?"

"But I was an eye-witness. I saw you tear down the nest and kill its little family. It was only after your fury had been sated that you fell. And I have been watching you while you slept.

"You are a sick man, Judas," I go on earnestly. "The very fact that you are unconscious of the evil deeds you commit is proof of what I say. Yes, a sick man, or possessed of a devil who works his wicked will through you. Philosophically speaking, the latter hypothesis is indeed incredible. But I know what I have seen."

Judas keeps obstinately silent.

"Sick or possessed," I continue, "there is no other alternative. But you can still appeal to one who is able to heal all manner of sicknesses, and to cast out devils-if devils there be. I

mean, of course, the Master."

"I will not go to Jesus," declares Judas angrily, "and I still believe you mistaken in what you say. Or even granting that it may be true, I am abundantly able to take care of myself. At this very moment, and in spite of all the terrible things of which you accuse me, I am feeling stronger and better than ever in my life. Why should I go to Jesus?"

We resume our journey. In silence on my part; but the Iscariot remains in the highest spirits, laughing incessantly and rallying me on my evident depression. For I am beginning to realize that the wretched man is in desperate case. He cannot comprehend that he needs help; or rather, his pride forbids him the thought of appealing to any power superior to his own will;

he is and will continue to remain sufficient unto himself.

Despite the customary boastfulness of Judas concerning the mighty works of Jesus of Nazareth, I am convinced that he does not really believe in them or in the authority of their doer. In proof of this assertion, I recall that while I and the other disciples have fallen into the habit of referring to our leader as the Master, Judas never employs that designation; always the Iscariot uses the simple term Jesus, both in addressing him directly and in speaking of him. A small thing, perhaps, but a significant one. Of all the sins which the heart of man may cherish, there is one—pride—the most separating and the most deadly.

Late that evening we arrived at Capernaum; and, on repairing to Simon Peter's house, I found there the other disciples surrounding the Master and eagerly relating to him the various events of their just completed mission—a marvellous story of faith and achievement. I blushed to think how little I had to tell, but apparently there was no difference in the warmth of the Master's welcome; I knelt and he laid his hands in blessing on my head. As I rose to my feet, I became aware that my travelling companion was not in the company; Judas must have secretly slipped away to his own lodging, for certainly he had come with me to the gate of Peter's courtyard, and he must have seen that the Master was within.

Jesus said no word, but his eyes were sad as they rested on the Twelve and found that one was missing. And I could not help recalling the Master's saying in the discourse at the pool of Bethesda, as recorded by John: "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life."

MIRACLES AND WONDERS

ND now I come to an extraordinary happening; extraordinary not only for its actual content, but from the fact that it is the single important incident in the ministry of the Master recorded by all four of the canonical Evangelists. I refer, of course, to the feeding of the five thousand.

Worn out by long weeks of labour among the lost sheep of the house if Israel, the Master had retired to a desert place near Bethsaida Julias on the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee, taking with him the Twelve. Judas Iscariot indeed was absent in Sepphoris, but his place in our ranks had been filled by Luke, lately

arrived in Galilee on one of his flying visits.

The Master needed rest and refreshment, but the multitude insisted on seeking him out; and presently we were surrounded by some five thousand men, women, and children, most of whom had come afoot from every quarter of the countryside. Jesus, as ever, was moved with compassion; accordingly he resumed his accustomed ministry of teaching and healing. But when the day began to wear away, certain of the disciples suggested the wisdom of dismissing the people that they might seek food and lodging for the approaching night. "They need not depart," answered the Master. "Give ye them to eat."

Philip, the practical-minded, was ready with his objection. "Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them,"

he urged, "that every one of them may take a little."

Jesus did not seem to be disconcerted by the exigency of the situation. Quietly he waited, and now it was Andrew who spoke up. "There is a lad here," he said, "which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes; but what are they among so many?"

"Make the men sit down," commanded Jesus.

Now, for all that here was a desert place, there was grass in abundance, grass just greening after the winter rains, for this was the early spring with the Passover not far away. Obediently the great company took their places in orderly array, by hundreds and by fifties; they waited silent and expectant.

The Master, looking up to heaven, blessed and brake the

loaves and likewise the two fishes; then, dividing this meagre provender into twelve equal portions, he gave it into the hands of the disciples, and commanded them to distribute to the people. Luke stepped forward to act in the stead of Judas Iscariot, but one portion of bread and smoked fish remained before the Master, unappropriated. That portion was mine. I could not bring myself to assist in a performance so incredible and fantastic; this was nothing less than pure magic, and I would have none of it.

Jesus apparently took no notice of my defection; he sat apart, on a boulder, and talked quietly with the boy whose generosity had provided the material means for the exercise of the Master's wonder-working will. Only a young goatherd from Bethsaida Julias, and these few loaves and fishes had been intended for his own evening meal. Gladly he had given his all in the service of the Master, and his offering had been accepted in the same spirit. I could find it in my heart to envy this nameless lad as he sat at the feet of Jesus, his eager eyes fixed on the Master's face. Yes, he had done what he could, while I continued to stand apart in sulky isolation, unhappy in my belief and yet unable to conquer my churlishness. I turned away to watch what was going on.

Each of my fellow-disciples had provided himself with a shallow basket of plaited willow-ware in which to carry the modicum of bread and fish. Methodically they passed through the long lines of seated people. There was no hurry and no confusion. All seemed to partake of the provision and all seemed to be satisfied; and so carefully were the proprieties observed, that the disciples, in retracing their footsteps, gathered up the crumbs which had fallen on the turf and presented the fragments for the Master's inspection. At his command the crumbs were scattered on the flat top of a rock-cropping a little way off, to be presently appropriated, with great twittering, by an immense flock of birds descending out of the blue to partake of this welcome addition to their larder. A sentence from the Sermon on the Mount flashed into my mind: "Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them."

No audible word had been spoken, but I became aware that the Master was calling me. On presenting myself Jesus handed me a wooden bowl lined with fresh grape-vine leaves and containing that very portion of bread and fish which it had been my—neglected—duty to distribute. Following the direction of his gaze, I saw a woman sitting apart from the throng; evidently she had been overlooked in the apportionment of food, and

Jesus desired me to repair the omission. This was a direct command and one which I could hardly refuse to execute. I took the

bowl and turned to carry out the Master's wish.

A very old woman, enfeebled both through age and by her abstinence from bodily nourishment. Her face was drawn, her eyes lack-lustred, and her whole attitude one of weariness and dejection; she looked at me uncomprehendingly. I placed the provision in her listless hands on which the swollen, bluish veins stood out with cruel distinctness, and waited. A faint smile, and then her grey head was bowed in grace for this unexpected meat; I could fancy that she was reciting the age-old benediction at every orthodox Jewish meal: "Blessed art thou, O Lord our God, Key of the universe, who hath brought forth bread from the ground."

The moments passed, but still she did not eat, and I wondered if perchance the poor creature were too weak to taste even of the Master's bounty. Yet her lips continued to move in voiceless

prayer.

With an indescribable gesture of reverence, the woman handed me back the bowl containing the food, the latter absolutely untouched. But a surprising physical change had come over her the dull eyes brightened with new life, a returning tide of colour in her cheeks, the hands steady and strong. Then, rising to her feet, she made a profound obeisance to the distant figure of the Master, and walked away with the springy step of a young girl.

I understood. To this woman, and doubtless to many, many others among the five thousand, the generous offering of the little lad, multiplied by the power of the Master's blessing, partook of the nature of a sacrament, its spiritual essence wholly transcending its material accidents. For these high souls it was not necessary that they should press with their teeth (as one of our later commentators has phrased it) the actual substance of this bread from heaven. And yet they did eat and were filled; they had shared with Jesus that ineffable sustenance of which he had spoken to us at the well of Sychar: "I have meat to eat that ye know not of." A hard saying as it had seemed to me at the time, but now gloriously revealed to them that are of an humble and believing heart. "They did all eat, and were filled."

The sun had set, the multitude had departed for their homes, and we of the Twelve had gone down to the landing-place, already embarked and only waiting for the arrival of our leader.

Naturally we were still talking of the marvel which we had witnessed, a marvel in which we ourselves had borne a part.

Judas Iscariot, who had now rejoined the party, was especially eager and interested. "The fame of this prodigy will run to the ends of the earth," he declared. "Herod, yes, and Cæsar himself will be wondering what Jesus will do next, and feeling if their crowns are still secure upon their heads. It is working out beautifully—just as I had foreseen. But where is Jesus?"

James Minor came down to the beach. "Where is Jesus?" again demanded Judas. "There is no time to be lost if he is to

seize the skirts of chance."

"The Master—" began James Minor.

"Yes, yes," interrupted the Iscariot. "Tell us—and quickly!"

"He is alone; I bear a message from him."

"I asked you where Jesus was," insisted Judas. "The iron is hot—we must strike. Now!"

"The Master is gone up into a mountain apart for a night of vigil and prayer. The people have desired to take him by force and make him a king. But he will have none of it."

Judas stared, gloomy and incredulous. "He—he will have none of it!" the Iscariot stammered. "What folly is this!"

"The Master wishes," went on James, "that we should take ship and cross to Bethsaida of Galilee, there to await his coming."

"Where is Jesus?" demanded Judas for the fourth time. "I will seek him out for myself, and compel him to come. It is a

kingdom that awaits him."

"I shall not tell you," answered James Minor. Judas made a threatening gesture, but already Simon Zelotes had stepped between the two men, and there was a glitter in his eye which gave Judas pause. Sullenly the Iscariot yielded, and presently the oars were manned and the boat pushed off from land. The wind being contrary, the sail could not be hoisted, and the rowing quickly became toilsome. It was now quite dark.

For long hours we took our turn at the oars, but the wind was

blowing half a gale, and we made little progress.

It was about the fourth watch of the night, and we were well spent with our fruitless exertions. The wind suddenly died down, and it was succeeded by a light mist through which the rays of the moon shone wanly. In the uncertain light even familiar landmarks were difficult to discern, everything appearing unduly distorted and strangely magnified.

"Look!" shouted Philip. "What is that?"

For an instant the mist seemed to part. The coast from which we had sailed hours before was again close at hand; and there,

a furlong away, became visible the face and figure of the Master; to all appearance, he was walking on the surface of the water.

"It is a spirit!" exclaimed Thomas. He was shaking with fear, and the rest of us were in like plight. Then I summoned all of my resolution of mind. There must be a natural cause for this seemingly incredible phenomenon; what could it be?

Assuredly the Master was not proceeding along the beach, parallel to the ship, as I had at first conjectured, for I could see distinctly that there was open water behind him as well as at both

sides. And then I remembered.

A few paces below our point of embarkation I had noticed a peculiar formation—a narrow spit of rock that jutted out for a considerable distance into the lake. A danger to navigation, since it was barely awash and its position could be determined

with certainty only by landmarks on the shore.

This, of course, must be the explanation. Jesus had walked out on the submerged ledge, and was now standing at its extreme tip; the illusion in the half-light was startling. But my fellow-disciples, unaware of this wholly invisible causeway, continued to cry out in terror. And, at that precise moment, the wind sprang up again in boisterous fashion, driving the mist before it. The Master's voice came to us clearly, the boat drifting almost within arm's length of where he was standing.

"Be of good cheer," called Jesus. "It is I; be not afraid." Simon Peter sprang into the bow of the ship. "Lord, if it be thou," he exclaimed, "bid me come to thee on the water." And

Jesus answered, "Come."

Without hesitation, Peter flung himself out of the ship. For an instant, he, too, seemed to be walking, poised securely on the unstable element. Then, with a cry, he threw up his arms and

began to sink.

I guessed what had happened. As he leaped, Peter had reached the firm footing of the submerged reef of rock. But almost immediately he had swerved aside. Perhaps he had stumbled; at all events, he had slipped into deep water with the

usual, the inevitable result; now he was sinking.

The Master acted promptly. He stretched forth his hand and caught Peter, drawing him back to safety. "O thou of little faith," said Jesus, "wherefore didst thou doubt?" The ship was now close at hand, and the twain had only to step into our rescuing arms. Again the gusty disturbance abated and the sea became calm. The prodigy had been accomplished, and it seems that I alone had been able to resolve its apparent inconsistency with the laws of the natural world. And then, a mo-

ment later, my confident rationalization received a severe shock. Simon Peter, of course, was wet through and dripping from his almost total immersion. But upon the garments of Jesus there was no drop of moisture, and even the soles of his sandals were dry.

Well, what are we to conclude? At least this much: the certainty that neither height of mountain nor depth of sea, nor things present, nor things to come, nor life nor death, nor any other creature can hinder Jesus from coming to the aid and comfort of us who love him. But what of the chief of the Apostles? Could Peter ever forget what happened that night on the Galilæan lake? What a glorious, multi-coloured moment in Simon Peter's life! He could not have told whether he was treading unstable water or still more unsubstantial air. And yet one stupendous certainty must have possessed him; he was walking with Jesus, partaking of the eternal nature, sustained by the limitless energy of the Master; admitted, if only for a moment, to a world untouched by earthly sense, undimmed by mortal error—the world of immortal and ineffable light wherein forever walk the spirits of just men made perfect.

Moreover, Simon Peter went to Jesus because he loved him. Yes, it was love for the Master which induced Peter to cast himself into the sea; and it was love which sustained him until that fatal instant when faith failed and he began to sink. But could faith have failed if Peter's love had not been turned away from Jesus and centred upon himself? His poor, miserable self!

A stormy sea! Once again Simon Peter was to walk with Jesus amidst the tempest of Holy Week, and once again he was to fail, even to the point of his shameful denial of the Master. But there was to be no third fall from grace. The legend is still current in the history of the Church; how that Simon—Peter the Rock—became discouraged with the progress of his mission at Rome, how he had determined to return to Jerusalem where his personal safety would be assured. But as he fled along the Appian Way, there met him one whose visage was more marred than any man, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And he said unto Peter: "Quo vadis?"—"Whither goest thou?" Whereupon Simon Peter, looking on that thorn-crowned countenance, turned and went back to Rome, back to his long imprisonment and agonizing death. What was now the impelling force? Faith? no; Hope? no; Love? yes. Peter had been called once more to walk with Jesus upon a windy deep! But on this, the last time, he was to be sustained to the end by an unfaltering, an all-conquering love to his Lord and Master-that love which many waters cannot quench, neither can the floods drown it.

In worshipful amazement the disciples resumed the voyage and the wind being now fair, the landfall on the western shore was made without further incident.

And now I must record a lengthy interlude in my association

with Jesus of Nazareth.

Shortly after the feeding of the five thousand and the walking on the water, the Master announced his intention of going up to Jerusalem in order to be present at the second Passover of his earthly ministry. And he was to be accompanied by only one of his disciples—Judas Iscariot. How astonishing! Yet I fancied that I understood. The Master knew that the Iscariot was in danger, great danger. Some dark and dominating force (whatever its precise nature might be) was driving Judas to destruction, and the Master desired to succour him. But even Jesus cannot save a man against that man's own wish and will. All that the Master could do was to give Judas opportunity to make his confidence and voice his appeal for help. This opportunity would be afforded by the journey which the two would make together. Alas! that Judas, in his wilful pride, refused to give that confidence and seek that all-sufficient aid. As I afterwards learned, the Iscariot accompanied the Master only as far as Jericho. There he asked permission to part company, making the plea that he must attend to some business interests in Idumæa. Jesus had no recourse but to accede to the request, and so Judas, without having said a single word upon an issue so vitally concerning himself, went his way-to his own place! It was the Iscariot's last chance. And he had failed to take it!

During the period of his absence, the Master had decreed that the missionary work already inaugurated should be continued and on an extended scale; the number of the disciples was to be increased to seventy, the new recruits to be selected from among the more active and zealous of the Master's following. The name of Judas would not be included in the roster, since he was to accompany Jesus on the journey south; and, to my surprise, the Master indicated his wish that I should return to my mother's house in Cana, the state of Zilla's health having steadily become more precarious. This may seem strange, in view of the Master's warning to an earlier, would-be disciple: "He that loveth

father or mother more than me is not worthy of me."

Very true, but to read a bald literalism into this warning is utterly to misunderstand the Master's meaning. Jesus did insist

that nothing among earthly obligations should be paramount to devotion to his service; but that he ever despised or even undervalued the claims of our tender human relationships is grotesquely fallacious. Any such assertion is easily refuted by recalling the Master's attitude towards his own mother and his so-called brethren. He could not suffer them to oppose or thwart his mission among men, but he never failed in dutiful affection for those to whom he was bound by a common family tie. And so when he commanded me to minister to the necessities of my mother, I was quick to understand and glad to obey.

Our farewells to the Master had been uttered, he had departed with Judas on the trans-Jordanian route to Jerusalem, and I made my way at once to Cana of Galilee.

I found a great and alarming change in Zilla. Nowadays my mother hardly left her couch on the upper gallery of the house, she had wasted away to a mere shadow of her former self, and the flush of fever was ever visible on her thin face. Yet she welcomed me with such warmth and gaiety that, for the moment, I was deceived into thinking that with my care and nursing she might yet be restored to health. Then, as the slow days went by, this first confidence dwindled and was replaced by a great fear.

Be it known that my relationship to Zilla had been something more than that of mere mother and son; always between us had existed that peculiar understanding which transcends speech and which is possible only to natures perfectly attuned. We might be together for hours without the interchange of a single word, and yet perfectly cognizant of each other's very thought and emotion, entirely content in that voiceless companionship. Yes, and we were always ready to play together, that delicate form of intimacy which so seldom outlasts the period of childhood. And so when, little by little, Zilla failed to respond to my jesting invitations to our old-accustomed pastimes, I knew that some tremendous change was impending, a change which I could not, for the moment, bring myself to face.

One lovely afternoon I was sitting, as usual, with Zilla in the upper gallery. Down in the courtyard the first of the spring flowers were blossoming; and since my mother seemed brighter and stronger than her wont of late, I suggested that she should make the effort of coming down-stairs in order to pluck a few azaleas for the adornment of our evening meal. "For if you persist," I told her, "in this indolent habit of lying all day upon your pallet, you will soon be forgetting how to use your legs.

Perhaps that has happened already, and I shall have to begin to teach you how to walk as one does with a babe. Stand up now

and you shall have your first lesson."

Zilla smiled and assented. I lifted her from the couch and carried her—a light burden, alas!—to a corner of the gallery where I placed her on her feet; she swayed slightly, but managed to keep her balance. Taking my position a few paces away, I held up a ball of vermillion-dyed wool with which the kitten had been playing. "Only two or three steps," I challenged, "and you shall have this pretty thing for your very own. Come, Mother; it is a game which you can play well if you will but try." I tossed the ball from hand to hand, and stood waiting.

Obediently Zilla made the effort, she took one uncertain step; then, with the laughing light dying out of her eyes, she plunged forward and I barely succeeded in averting her fall. Back on the couch I bathed her brow with rose-water and presently she

revived. But her breathing was quick and laboured.

"I am sorry," I said. "But at least we have made a beginning. To-morrow we shall have a second lesson, and you will do ever so much better. I daresay I had many a tumble before I managed to walk across this long gallery."

"To-morrow?" said Zilla questioningly. "But—perhaps—

there will be no to-morrow."

"Mother!"

"Listen, my Nathanael. Through many years we have been together, save for your absences from home, your journeys to distant countries to pursue your learned studies. For, of course, you had your own life to live and I could not oppose your wishes. But now it is my turn—to go away; to a land that is very far off."

Zilla put out her arms and drew me into a long embrace. No further words passed between us, and presently she exhaled a little sigh and lay quite still.

There was naught left for me to do but to close her eyes-

her dear, dear eyes!

The Paschal Feast has long since come and gone, but still the return of the Master is unaccountably delayed; the months pass and nothing is heard of his movements and doings. Nor has the *lacuna*, or blank, ever been satisfactorily filled. John records the bare fact that this second Passover was at hand when the five thousand were fed, but gives no details concerning it. The other Evangelists say nothing at all. The Master himself, when he returned to Galilee in the summer of the year 29, Anno

Domini, vouchsafed no information, and none of us dared question him. But the tradition persists in the Church that during these hidden months Iesus made a far-flung journey-to Cathay and to the mysterious table-land which lies north of the empire of Ind; and that he preached the glad tidings of the kingdom of God to the people who dwelt in this outer darkness, thereby anticipating in his own person the mission which later on he was to enjoin upon the disciples: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." *

* More than two generations have passed, and still the silence remains unbroken. But through devious channels we hear reports of an established system of faith and order in these remote regions, a system akin, at least in outward form, to our own holy religion—bells and candles and incense and vestments and fasting and penance; even an approximation to the mysteries of the Eucharistic rite. Yet a system, in its essence, pagan and unspiritual. How strange that a tree supposedly planted by the Master's own hand should bear only this bitter and unsatisfying fruit!

Strange indeed, yet how shall we, finite human beings, presume to weigh in our little scales the handiwork of the Almighty, or seek to fathom the eternal purpose? The seed is sown in the ground, to be subject there to the germinating forces of the fecund earth, of the warming sun, and of the dew from heaven. But the harvest waits upon the Father's will, and in His own good time it shall be gathered—some thirty- and some sixty- and His own good time it shall be gathered—some thirty- and some sixty- and some an hundred-fold. Our part is but to obey the Master's command; and, as Elder Brother James was later on to admonish us, in his Epistle General: "Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain." Or surely we may rest upon the Master's own word, the parable in which He said: "So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed should the ground; and should shop and rice night and day, and the seed should the ground; and should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. * * * But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come."

Yes, we need not be disquieted in mind. Be the flowering early or late, what can that matter to Him with whom a thousand years are but as

yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night?

XVI

PETER RECEIVES THE KEYS

NDER the guidance of our newly recovered leader we have been making an extended journey northward, even across the boundary line and into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. The principal incident of this unique excursion into Gentile territory concerns the healing of the daughter of a Syro-Phænician woman. Matthew and Mark both tell the story, but I prefer the first version, since it seems to contain an echo of Matthew's own disappointment in being denied for so long the privilege of full membership in the Twelve. As Matthew now knows full well, this the Master did for to prove him, and a similar probation was imposed by Jesus upon this

Greek woman. To summarize the story:

The Master had entered into the borders of Syro-Phœnicia, and had sought to keep his presence secret. But, as Mark says, "he could not be hid." Now the woman's daughter was ill ("grievously vexed with a devil"), and so she seeks out the Master and implores his compassionate aid. Iesus, however, turns away, having answered her not a word. Yet the woman continues her importunities. Thomas, elderly, and fretful after a sleepless night, voices the general feeling of his fellow-disciples when he appeals to the Master: "Send her away; for she crieth after us." In apparent aloofness, Jesus answers the woman's entreaties with the frigid utterance: "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Whereupon the distracted mother falls at the Master's feet, calling out: "Lord, help me." Still more coldly he continues: "It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to the dogs." A final rebuff, as it would seem; but the mother's wit is sharpened by her need, and she replies: "Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table." Who could withstand a retort so perfect and so charming! Certainly not the Master, for he instantly rejoins: "O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt." Whereupon, as Matthew records it, "her daughter was made whole from that very hour."

An altogether lovely story and so eminently characteristic of this Master of ours and of his Gospel which knows no bounds of time or space; above all, no narrow limits of race or social condition. As our brother Paul was afterwards to declare: "God * * * hath made of one blood all nations of men * * * that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us." Now Jesus, while he was numbered by birth among the Chosen People, never thought of himself as the son of Abraham; always he was the Son of man; universal was his mission and universal were his love and mercy. And how wisely he acted to compel the flowering of a faith whose perfume shall linger throughout all time! The Syro-Phœnician woman's daughter might have been delivered as a mere incident of his ministry, deserving only of passing notice; but in the proving of this poor mother's patience is preserved for us who come after not alone the depth of the Master's love for all lost sheep, but also the height to which our imperfect human nature may attain. Only a woman of Canaan, Greek by race, Syro-Phœnician by nation; nameless and obscure. Indeed a poor earthen vessel. But lo! the treasure it contains

Turning again southward, our route led us to the coasts of Cæsarea Philippi in the tetrarchy of Philip, a son of Herod. A pleasant enough little city, and finely situated near one of the sources of the Jordan. Yet in no way distinguished, and it remains in my memory solely through one extraordinary incident

in the life and ministry of the Master.

The midday meal had been concluded and we were resting in the shade of an oleander thicket on the margin of the crystal-clear rivulet, the infant Jordan. We were a large company, for many other disciples had joined us, coming from all parts of the country. Jesus had absented himself for his customary hour of solitary prayer, but now he had returned and was sitting in the centre of the assembly. He appeared abstracted and remained for some time lost in thought, none venturing to break the pregnant silence. Suddenly the Master's gaze swept around the great circle of expectant faces. "Whom," he demanded, "do men say that I am?"

Involuntarily I started; this was a perilous topic for discussion, and particularly so in the presence of so many persons who could not be reckoned as fully accredited followers of the Master

-was it wise of Jesus to raise such an issue?

Philip, ready of speech as was his wont, was the first to respond to the inquiry. "Some say that thou art John the Baptist," he answered. "Others, Elias," ventured James Major.

"Jeremias," put in Thomas and wagged a doubtful beard.
"One of the prophets," shouted a voice from the crowd.

"But whom say ye that I am?" persisted the Master, and again his eyes commanded every countenance. It was a distinct challenge; and one man, Simon Peter, met it. Springing to his feet, a high colour in his cheeks, Peter answered firmly: "Thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God."

A bold claim indeed, and a deep-throated sigh seemed to run through the assembly; what incredible doctrine was this! My own heart stopped beating as I listened to the Master's reply.

"Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona," said Jesus: "for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

It was a tense moment. A man sitting on the outer fringe of the crowd—one Eleazar by name and perhaps the most zealous and enthusiastic of the Master's informal following—rose quietly and disappeared in the direction of the town. After a momentary hesitation, Eleazar was followed by two or three others. A fourth man sprang to his feet and ostentatiously shook the dust from his sandals as he turned away. Half a score of men and women, starting from widely separated points of the audience, swelled the ranks of the deserters. And then—like to the bursting of a dam—the defection became a rout; stumbling and jostling one another in their haste, the company dissolved into a mere mob of fugitives streaming along the highway to Cæsarea Philippi. Presently we were left alone; the great mass of the disciples who had followed the Master so joyfully in the glorious springtime of his ministry, had gone back and would walk no more with him.

Jesus watched the dispersion with an enigmatic twist to his lips. "Will ye also go away?" he asked as he looked back at us, the Twelve. Once more Simon Peter took it on himself to answer for his fellows; flushed by the honour but just now conferred upon him, he replied: "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God."

A radiant smile rewarded Simon Peter's declaration of faith, but almost immediately it faded. "Have I not chosen you twelve," said the Master, "and one of you is a devil." Involun-

tarily each man glanced at his neighbour; nay, there was one exception, for Judas Iscariot stared straight ahead at the dusty cloud which still marked the progress cityward of the recreant disciples; apparently he had not heard the Master's fateful pronouncement, or it had meant nothing to him.

But the drama of the day had yet another act to play. Without any preliminary explanation, Jesus proceeded to draw aside the dark curtain of the future: how he must go unto Jerusalem, and there suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three

days rise again.

Stunned and cowering, we listened to this totally unimagined forecast; that is, all but Peter who, still intoxicated by his earlier triumph, flung himself into the breach. "Be it far from thee, Lord," he shouted rebukingly. "This shall not be unto thee."

Instantaneously came the crushing rejoinder: "Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men."

Judas Iscariot laughed.

Poor Simon Peter! With the accolade of the Master's blessing still fresh upon his brow to be suddenly cast down from his coign of honour, the primacy of the Apostolic band; what a fall was there! Uttering no word of protest or excuse, Peter sank back in his place, the rosy blush of his short-lived triumph already submerged in the still deeper crimson tide of his shame.

And Judas laughed again.

In an unbroken silence we resumed our journey. I will not presume to voice the inner thoughts of my fellow-disciples, but I must marshal my own chaotic emotions into some sort of order.

I must face the issue frankly. For all that I have been sadly lax in my religious observances, and aloofly sceptical of all phenomena not amenable to the laws of cold reason—for all that, I repeat, I cannot forget that the blood of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob flows in my veins. I am a son of the *Torah*, and what spiritual convictions I possess rest upon the rock of the first commandment of the Decalogue as handed down by Moses from the flaming heights of Sinai: "Thou shalt have none other gods but me." Here is the very core of Jewry, a faith buttressed by the majestic declaration of the *Shema*: "Hear, O Israel: the Lord thy God is one Lord." How can the glory of that eternal Unity, one and indivisible, be shared with mortal men, even with such a man as Jesus of Nazareth? Yes, Jesus whose mighty works cause also the devils to tremble, and who speaks

as never man spoke before; Jesus, the comfort of every lonely heart, the strength and consolation of every seeking soul; Jesus, the lord of the life more abundant and master of men. No, not even with him!

It is a difficult situation. For, while refusing to accord to our Master the honour due to God alone, I still follow him, and I shall continue to do so while life itself shall last. How can I justify myself to myself? I remain in his fellowship for the simple reason that I love him.

It was a week later and on the evening of the Sabbath when the Master led us forth from Cæsarea Philippi, taking a course a little to the northeast, or in the direction of Mount Hermon. It was the close of a lovely day and the great bulk of Shemir, the "snow-mountain," limned clear in the quiet sky; not even a wisp of cloud to dim its crystalline majesty. For a short distance we walked through vine-clad hills and orchards of mulberry, apricot, and fig trees. Then we came to cornfields, and the fig gave place to pear and quince. The ascent grew steeper and we passed through coppices of oak; now we had reached a little plateau whose only vegetation consisted of dwarfish shrubs. Here the Master bade us halt.

I looked about me. In front opened a ravine leading to one of the inferior spurs of the mountain. At its head I could make out turfy banks and gravelly slopes; still farther up and there was nothing but bare rock alternating with broad patches of snow, the latter discoloured by the dust blown down from the peak. A lonely place and set far apart from the bustle and confusion of the common life. A nameless but eagerly expectant emotion possessed me.

An emotion doomed to disappointment, for Jesus indicated his wish that only three of the Twelve should accompany him to the summit—Peter, James, and John. We, the others, would

remain where we were until the Master's return.

I was conscious of a bitter chagrin. Why was it that these three had been singled out for this special favour? The same discrimination had been made by Jesus when he suffered only Peter, James, and John to accompany him into that silent room of the house of Jairus where the little maid lay in her long sleep. And now again I had been passed over, excluded from the inner circle of the Master's friends. Why? Was I not also his true disciple? did my devotion to the person of Jesus possess a lesser quality than that of Simon Peter, of James Major, of John the brother of James? Whereupon my heart grew hot and heavy.

The other disciples were busy with their simple preparation for the coming night, and I walked to a spot where I should be entirely alone; there I folded my cloak about me and sat down.

I tried to think of other things than my recent mortification and insensibly my vexation of spirit became soothed by Nature's secret balm. For even at this comparatively low elevation, the prospect was one both wide and appealing. To the southward lay the lake of Galilee, a mere slate-coloured drop in its rocky saucer. Towards the northeast stretched the great plain of Syria, an emerald expanse of vegetation, silvered with the pleasant streams of Abana and Pharpar, better than all the waters of Israel. To the southeast extended the tawny sands of the desert, broken only by the melancholy cleft of Jordan, or the Descender—an ochre-coloured ribbon fringed by the sickly green of mandrake and papyrus thickets. The Great Sea, to the westward, was invisible at this altitude; but my mind reverted to an ascent which I had made, two summers ago, of one of the principal peaks of Hermon—an unforgetable experience.

It was sunset when I reached the summit. In the west the sun was sliding into the Great Sea, there to be extinguished like a blue spark; now it was gone, and the snow-covered cap of the northern peak, twin-brother to the elevation on which I stood, was all-luminous with the rosy radiance of the afterglow. Quickly the flush faded, and I watched the vast, pointed shadow of the cone sweep swiftly over the plain until it rested upon Damascus seventy miles away; then overhead in the purpling dusk shone out, one by one, the stars of the summer night.

Alas! that this ineffable vision is of the past and of the past alone. It was not for me to stand this night with Jesus upon the mountain top and behold the heavens declaring the glory of God. That high privilege had been accorded to Peter, James, and John; Jesus had neither needed nor desired the poor companionship of Nathanael Bar-Talmai. I shivered as the evening wind blew cold upon my shoulder-blades, and again the well of bitterness overflowed my inmost being. A shameful confession this, but good for the soul; moreover, it was part of the lesson I had yet to learn in its entirety.

I must have slept, for my next conscious impression was that of the sun's rays impinging upon my face; stinging arrows that pierced my eyelids and caused my temples to throb painfully. I sat up and looked about me.

The plateau was crowded with people, since, as ever, the multitude had followed hard on the footsteps of Jesus, eager to

be in company with the great Master. A little group of excited

men and women attracted my particular attention.

In its centre stood a tall, gaunt man; his black beard plentifully streaked with grey, his worn face fixed in a certain hopeless impassivity. His arm was thrown protectingly about the shoulders of a youth of some five-and-twenty summers, pallid of countenance and evidently suffering from some obscure disturbance of the physical system. As I approached, I noticed Thomas and Matthew hastily walking away in the opposite direction; the rest of the Twelve were nowhere in sight. I appealed to a bystander; what was the trouble?

"The man's son," he replied, "is a lunatick and sore vexed of a devil. The father brought him to Jesus of Nazareth for healing, but the wonder-worker is absent. Whereupon the disciples were asked to undertake the cure, but none of them could do anything to abate the youth of his torment. It is all very

strange.'

The father of the afflicted youth heaved a long sigh and endeavoured to lead his son away. But the young man resisted, his teeth clenched and his eyeballs rolling wildly.

"Behold here is still another of Jesus' disciples; doubtless he can heal thy son." I knew that voice; it was the voice of Judas

Iscariot and there was mockery in its smooth tones.

It was an embarrassing situation, for every eye had instantly been fixed upon me and many officious hands were urging me into the heart of the throng. A sardonic smile curved the claycoloured lips of the Iscariot. The father glanced at me, but there was not an atom of confidence in that indifferently inquiring gaze.

I was angry at being placed in such a false position. But there was no help for it. Hesitatingly I put out my hand to touch the afflicted youth. "In the Name—in the Name—" I began, stammering and confused. With a snarl the young man turned and bit at my hand; I drew it back quickly, and the crowd roared with oafish laughter. What an ignoble conclusion!

The throng parted suddenly; the Master had come at last, and his tranquil gaze immediately dominated the scene. Volubly the father told his story. "My son * * * hath a dumb spirit; and whensoever he taketh him, he teareth him: and he foameth, and gnasheth with his teeth, and pineth away: and I spake to thy disciples that they should cast him out; and they could not."

The Master's eye fell on me as I stood a little apart, shaken

and ashamed. "O faithless generation," he said (while I cringed at the rebuking words), "how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him unto me."

The father tried to lead his son forward. But no sooner had the lunatick approached the Master than he suffered a violent recurrence of his malady. The dumb spirit appeared to be tearing at his very vitals; he fell to the ground and wallowed, foaming. Even in my perturbation of mind I recognized the marks of that dreadful disease, the "falling sickness," as described to me by Luke.

"How long is it ago," asked the Master, "since this came

unto him?"

"Of a child," was the answer. "And ofttimes it hath cast him into the fire, and into the waters to destroy him: but if thou canst do anything, have compassion on us, and help us."

"If thou canst believe," replied Jesus, "all things are possible to him that believeth."

The stoical calm of the unhappy parent underwent an incredible change. Tears coursed down his face as he cried out: "Lord, I believe; help thou my unbelief."

"Thou dumb and deaf spirit," said the Master with a commanding assurance, "I charge thee, come out of him, and

enter no more into him."

The possessed youth was taken with a final convulsion. An inhuman cry issued from his lips as the foul spirit seized and rent him sore; he lay as one dead.

"He is dead," pronounced a voice from the crowd. But Jesus took him by the hand, lifted him up, and delivered him

to his father.

Quickly the assemblage dispersed and Jesus was again alone, save for the Twelve who gathered about him. "Why could we not cast him out?" asked Philip, venturing to break the silence.

"Because of your unbelief," answered the Master. kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting." The reply had been addressed ostensibly to us all; but again the look of Jesus was directed full upon my crimsoned and stricken face.

Now I understand—at least in part. When I fared forth, a few months ago, on the mission of the Twelve, I had but one thought in mind—the carrying out of the Master's command: "Heal the sick; cast out devils; proclaim the coming of the kingdom of God." And so the mighty works were accomplished naturally and inevitably. What other explanation could there be but that I was the obedient instrument of the Master's purpose; my will subject to his will, my weakness fortified by his strength, my unbelief swallowed up in the consciousness of his all-glorious power working in me both to will and to do of his good pleasure. Now, in my late and mortifying failure, the conditions had been reversed. My own self, not his, had been uppermost, a self bitter and jealous at the apparent slight upon me in my exclusion from the innermost circle of the disciples. Yes, unbelief had now become active, palsying my tongue and rendering impotent my hand.

"Lord, I believe; help thou my unbelief!" had been the appeal of the father of the lunatick child, uttered with strong crying and with tears. He had brought his unbelief to Jesus, and the Master had instantly accepted the poor offering, transmuting by virtue of his alchemy the dead weight of a leaden doubt into the pure gold of an effectual faith. Whereupon his

son had been healed.

I, on the contrary, had clung to my weak, miserable self, cherishing my jealous resentment, and thus activating the poison

which had paralyzed my hand and sealed my lips.

Because of my unbelief. I had not been conscious of my own unfitness to be an eye-witness of the glory that was to be manifested on the mountain top; moreover, in my hardness of heart and pride of place, I had even been moved to despise the simple and unlettered men upon whom this honour had been bestowed. But the Master had known. Peter and James and John-unlearned in worldly lore and yet receptive to the revelation of the wisdom from on high. I, Nathanael Bar-Talmai-wise in my own conceit, seeking to fill myself with the bitter roots of logic and dialectic, and therefore unable to assimilate that heavenly manna which alone can satisfy the hunger of the soul. Because of my unbelief! Not as yet could I take that unbelief to Jesus asking that the burden might be lifted. But, at least, my heart had been purged of its bitterness. I had been passed over, denied the ineffable vision on the mount, put to open shame before my fellows and the multitude. But the exclusion had been justly made, the lesson both needed and deserved. Once again Jesus hath done all things well.

It was not until many days later that I heard the full story of what had happened that night upon the mountain; Jesus having enjoined upon Peter, James, and John that they should tell no man of the glory vouchsafed to their mortal eyes. Nor will I now seek to retell that story as already set forth by Matthew, Mark, and Luke; what poor words of mine can stand

before their recording of a beautiful mystery, so simple and yet so perfect. We have it all in the synoptic Gospels, and anyone may follow for himself the various degrees of that great the-ophany—the altering of the fashion of the Master's countenance: his raiment becoming white and glistering, white as no fuller on earth can whiten them: the mighty column of the Law and the Prophets symbolized by the glorious phantasms of Moses and Elias: the setting of the capital upon that column through the utterance of the Almighty from the bright cloud, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him": the chilling fear of the disciples as the vision faded and they found themselves alone with Jesus: the comforting voice of the Master, "Arise, and be not afraid."

The Transfiguration, the momentary unveiling of his eternal glory! But I could not have borne it then. Because of my unbelief.

The Transfiguration! The culminating stage in the earthly career of the Master. From henceforth the curve proceeds definitely downward—from the mountain of his exaltation to the valley of his humiliation.

XVII

PRINCIPLE AND FORMULA

ANY were the lessons learned through our day-by-day companionship with the Master. There was the occasion on which a foolish dispute had arisen among the Twelve as to who should be the greatest in the coming kingdom. The argument had started while we were on our way to Capernaum, James Major having advanced the contention that he and his brother John were entitled to the supremacy. Now there was little of the diplomat about James; indeed his manner was distinctly arrogant, and John was not far behind him in truculence of speech. It was hardly surprising that Simon Peter should be stung into reminding the brothers of the special distinction conferred on him by the Master himself: "Thou art Peter * * * upon this rock I will build my church. * * * And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven." But John protested against the literal interpretation of the words, and James Major proceeded to argue that that statement could have no reference to the restoration in our own day of the throne of David—the Latin usurpers driven from the castle of Antonia, the Roman eagles hovering no longer above the Holy City. The discussion became general and acrimonious. Thomas, by virtue of his seniority and long experience in worldly affairs, insisted that he should not be overlooked in the expected distribution of patronage and power, and even Jude advanced his claims to consideration; was he not the reputed half-brother of Jesus? could the Master be unmindful of the tie of relationship? The dreamy Andrew listened with a puzzled air, but naturally he supported his brother Peter, while Matthew and James Minor were stout partisans of the sons of Zebedee. Philip was too sunny-hearted and too volatile of temperament to waste his energies in such a contention, and Judas Iscariot kept his own dark counsel, refusing to utter a single word. I myself found a mild amusement in listening to this profitless wrangling. What folly to imagine that Jesus could set up a temporal power against the might of Rome! what could he hope to accomplish in view of the actual odds-our little band opposed to Cæsar's seasoned legionaries!

Apparently the Master had taken no notice of the controversy. But when we were assembled that evening in the court-yard of Peter's house, Jesus unexpectedly revived the issue. "What was it," he asked, "that ye disputed among yourselves by the way?"

No one cared to answer the inquiry, even after it was repeated with a graver emphasis. Again I smiled to myself; what

foolish creatures grown men could be!

At one corner of the court sat Simon Zelotes, surrounded as usual by a group of youngsters. In spite of his roughness, the Zealot had a soft heart for any child; moreover, the little ones knew it and were quick to impose upon his weakness, if such it could be called. At this moment he was engaged in fashioning a set of fascinating toys for his young friends—oxen and fish, boats and water-wheels, soldiers and dolls—all carved from poplar wood. An incongruous spectacle, but that was Simon Zelotes when one came really to know him.

The Master looked over at the laughing and interested group; then he called a small boy by name. The child left his place, and advanced shyly to where we were sitting. Jesus drew the lad to his side. "If any man," he said, "desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all." Then, taking the little boy into his arms, he continued: "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven."

In truth, we do well to call this Jesus of ours a master of men. How unerringly he pierces to the core of any matter; how inevitably he uncovers the secret springs of action in every heart! The contestants in the late wordy warfare listened in abashed silence; the child, gently put down, ran away to join his fellows, and the incident appeared to be a closed book.

Yet not quite, for Simon Peter suddenly had a question to ask. "Lord," he began, "how oft shall my brother sin against

me, and I forgive him? till seven times?"

It was apparent that the contention lately raised by James Major and John still rankled in Peter's breast. Nominally peace had been restored, but Peter foresaw that the possibility of future friction remained, and he wanted a formula for dealing with it. Granting that discipleship with Jesus imposed the obligation of the forgiveness of trespasses, yet there must be some end to the patience of any self-respecting man; that was only reasonable. And so Peter wanted the Master to lay down a rule which in this particular should be as definite as the minute

regulations of life and conduct set forth in the Levitical code. Peter himself had suggested what seemed to be a generous limit of indulgence—"Till seven times?" But Jesus answered: "I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven."

Simon Peter's countenance clouded. Seventy times seven! Why here was a figure of speech which plainly taught that there could be no boundaries whatever, for seventy times seven was

equivalent to an infinite number.

The Master proceeded to drive the nail home; he went on to tell the story of the wicked servant who having received the remission of a great debt owed to his lord, yet showed himself implacable towards one of his fellow-servants over the trifling matter of a hundred pence. "Whereupon," as Matthew records the parable, "his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due."
"So likewise," finished Jesus, "shall my heavenly Father do

also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his

brother their trespasses."

It appears then that in following Jesus one must be prepared to accept conditions far more stringent than those obtaining in ordinary life, even a life lived in strict conformity to our Jewish obligation—the Law. For, the forgiveness of injuries—from the heart—is the hardest thing in the world; enmity is not a sin which can be expiated by the offering of a sacrifice—the pecuniary penalty of a pair of turtle-doves, or a kid from the flock, or even a fatling from the herd. No, the amend cannot be from the purse; it must be from the heart. Shall we-shall I—ever be able to measure up to such a lofty standard? But the alternative is a fearful one: "If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."

How slow we are to learn these lessons of love and service, of unselfishness and humility! The very next day John came to Jesus in a high state of indignation. "Master," he exclaimed, "we saw one casting out devils in thy name; and we forbade him, because he followeth not with us." But Jesus answered: "Forbid him not, for he that is not against us is on our part."

Shall we ever fully understand Jesus of Nazareth? Shall we ever succeed in following him along that rugged road upon which he walks so joyfully and so unerringly?

An interlude at Capernaum. One of the Roman collectors asked Simon Peter if his Master intended to pay the poll-tax which had just been levied by imperial decree. Peter, uncertain of his ground, had answered in the affirmative, but later he voiced his perplexity to Jesus. The Master, with his accustomed clarity of judgment, pointed out that his tribute was not legally due, since it was primarily a tax upon strangers or outlanders, and Judæa was as truly a province of the Empire as Apulia itself. Nevertheless, submission to the constituted authority being obligatory on all good citizens, he directed Peter to bait and drop a hook into the warm spring-fed waters of the little bay at Bethsaida. Hardly had the cast been made than the line tightened; there was a swirl of bubbles and foam, and from it emerged a silver-scaled monster, the biggest and finest Nile fish that had ever been captured by a Gennesaret fisherman. Matthew relates that Jesus, surveying the rich prize, said smilingly: "When thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money; that take, and give unto them for me and thee." But the author of one of the many apocryphal gospels, in telling the same story, declares that Chuzas, King Herod's steward, happened to be present when Peter made his memorable catch; here was indeed a royal fish for the royal table. Extracting a silver didrachma from his purse, Chuzas purchased the finny delicacy, and bore it away in triumph to Tiberias.

It matters little whether the coin was actually found in the fish's mouth, or was paid over in the course of an ordinary business transaction. The vital fact remains that Jesus was in need of the money, and that, as ever, his necessity was supplied

through the exercise of the Divine bounty.

The principle of obedience to the powers that be; surely this was the lesson—at least in part—which the Master desired to teach in the incident of the tribute money. As a subject of the Empire he obeyed its laws; and as a member of the Synagogue he complied with all of his religious obligations: he had been circumcised and presented at the appointed time in the Temple, he never failed in attendance at the services of the synagogue, and he was always present at the great Feast of the Passover; yes, none could say that Jesus of Nazareth was not a pious son of Israel.

But a mere slavish obedience to formula was never the Master's rule of life. A few months later his enemies among the scribes and Pharisees sought to embroil him with the civil authorities by compelling him to answer the categorical question: "Is it lawful to give tribute to Cæsar, or not?" A subtle dilemma, for would not payment be equivalent to acknowledging that the secular authority was the supreme and only one? But

the Master was equal to the occasion. "Show me the tribute money," he demanded. Taking the proffered coin, he continued: "Whose is this image and superscription?" "Cæsar's," came the unwilling reply, and the Master's retort was immediate and crushing. "Render to Cæsar," he said, "the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's." Yes, there was a limit to civic obedience; the Emperor himself must give place to the Almighty.

This was the only time that ever I saw a piece of money in Jesus' hand. And presently he gave the coin back to its owner.

Neither was ecclesiastical dogma sacrosanct to Jesus. Upon the simple foundation of the Law the scribes and doctors had erected a mountainous pile of additions and interpretations, a vast, top-heavy structure bursting with musty traditions, dusty with dialectical cobwebs—a burden too heavy for men's shoulders, and stultifying to the moral consciousness which burns as a pure flame in the heart of every son of Adam. Take, for example, the matter of Sabbath-day observance. The Law had enjoined that the seventh day of the week should be kept holy to the Lord, but to the plain rule of the Torah had been added the obligations listed in the Haggadah, the Mishna, and the Gemara—the oral and traditional body of statutes which by official decree had been invested with an authority which even

exceeded that of the original corpus juris.

Here then is where Jesus parted company with his professional co-religionists, and thereby incurred their lasting enmity. There was the occasion on which he was teaching in the synagogue on the Sabbath day. In the congregation was a woman crippled by a long-standing disease; Luke says "She was bowed together, and could in no wise lift up herself." The Master laid his hands upon her and said: "Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity." "Immediately," continues Luke, "she was made straight, and glorified God." However, the ruler of the synagogue indignantly protested; were there not six days in the week in which such secular matters as a healing could be accomplished? Whereupon the Master retorted: "Thou hypocrite, doth not each one of you on the sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering? And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this burden on the sabbath day?" There could be no answer to this question, but his adversaries hated him yet the more, biding their time that they might destroy him.

XVIII

THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES

T was the seventh month (Tishri) of this same year, at the end of the harvest, and the Feast of Tabernacles was close at hand. There were questionings and doubts among us. The opposition to the mission of the Master was growing steadily in Jewry; and I, for one, felt strongly that it would be dangerous for Jesus to show himself openly at Jerusalem. Yet some of the disciples urged him to attend the feast, arguing that a renewed demonstration of the mighty works would be sufficient to establish his position as a prophet and leader of our distressed people. Jesus listened to what Simon Peter and John had to say, but returned the positive answer: "My time is not yet come." And so he continued to abide in Galilee.

The autumn days slipped away, and, at the last possible moment, the Master decided to go up secretly to the Holy City; since the time was growing short, he chose the more direct route through Samaria. Most of the brethren had already departed, and Jesus was accompanied only by the two sons of Zebedee

and myself.

One peculiar incident occurred in the two days' march. It was necessary to seek lodgings for the night, and so Jesus sent James and John in advance to a certain small village that they might make arrangements for his reception. But, true to their inherent instincts of hostility to all Jews, the Samaritans refused the traditional hospitality of the east; the Master was on his way to Jerusalem and to that Temple which in their eyes was a false and polluted shrine; reason enough that the bigots should return a negative answer to the request. Whereupon James and John besought the Master to punish these insolents. John, the "Son of Thunder," was especially enraged. "Lord," he exclaimed, "wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did?" But Jesus' face grew sad. "The Son of man," he answered, "is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them." John stared incredulously, but the Master was firm; we went to another village.

Yet this was the selfsame Jesus who, a little later, was to de-

clare: "I am come to send fire on the earth." How shall we

reconcile these apparently inconsistent pronouncements?

Ah, but the distinction is a vital one. The Master would not punish men for their sins by consuming their natural bodies; there should be no recurrence of the fiery rain falling upon the inhabitants of those wicked cities, Sodom and Gomorrah; their lives blotted out in the fierce flames of the Almighty's wrath; the smoke of their torment ascending forever; nothing left but formless dust and ashes. No, the fire which Jesus came to cast upon the earth would be the cleansing blaze of his own supreme righteousness, burning away the dross of our human natures; a conflagration which should destroy only that which is base and unclean; and so present us, white and spotless, before the throne of God, purified though as by fire.

"The Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to

save them."

The Feast of Tabernacles (the feast, as the patriotic Jewish writers were wont to designate it), the final festival of the ingathering, the culminating stage in the ritual of thanksgiving for the fruits of the good earth. The grain fields had already given up their golden store; now it was the turn of the orchards and vineyards to yield their treasures of olives, grapes, and figs. On every side could be heard the loud shouts of the labourers as they trod in the wine-press, their legs and thighs stained purple by the generous juice. Half-grown boys passed in an unbroken stream between orchard and village, bearing flat baskets of osier twigs heaped high with the dark-green figs which must now be laid out to dry in the hot autumn sun before being placed in winter storage. From the middle distance came the creaking of the rude machinery of the olive mills and the trampling of the donkeys as they strained at their harness, while the millstones moved slowly round and round, expressing the rich oil which shall make the face of man to shine; everywhere the evidences of joyful activity—the harvest home!

The festival proper, at the Holy City, would draw an immense throng of pious worshippers; indeed the pilgrims would be so numerous that lodgings would be hard to find. Therefore Jerusalem itself would be transformed into a veritable garden—booths of green olive and vine branches being erected in court and on housetop, and also at every street intersection and open square—in order to accommodate the visitors; in every direction stood long rows of these leafy bowers with bunches of ripe fruit suspended over the doorways, the visible reminders of the rough

huts which sheltered our forefathers during the forty years of

wandering in the wilderness.

The Feast of Tabernacles was an ingathering not alone of the fruits of the orchard and vineyard, but also of the far-flung off-shoots of our national life. For this was pre-eminently the festival for the expatriates of Jewry; and, incidentally, the last opportunity for the payment of the Temple tribute money, that half-shekel of the Sanctuary coinage imposed, as a poll-tax, upon every male in Israel from twenty years old and upward. From every quarter of the habitable globe would the pious

pilgrims come—the rainbow-hued silks of rich merchants from Persia rubbing shoulder to shoulder with the rust-coloured camel's-skin robes of shepherds from the deserts of Chaldea; grave, grey-bearded scholars from the academic groves of Alexandria walking cheek-by-jowl with traders from the icy marshes of Germania, bright-eyed adventurers these latter and opulent in their cloaks of martin and sable with great chains of twisted links of gold about their necks; pallid exiles returning from the frost-bitten banks of the northern Danube to foregather with their sun-browned brothers from the steaming flats bordering the great river Euphrates; mercenary soldiers furloughed from the Hispanic peninsula, still wearing their horsehair-plumed copper helmets and short tunics of green-dyed leather, and eager to greet their old-time friends; long-haired countrymen from the Galilæan highlands arrayed in peasant garb of faded blue homespun and shod with rope sandals. Everywhere a babel of voices and the accents of strange tongues, as many in number as the traditional seventy nations of the Gentile world. Yet despite external differences in manner, costume, and even language, the common lineaments of Abraham's children remained plainly recognizable, proving again the truth of the old proverb, that a man may change his sky but not his habits of thought and feeling.

A time of thanksgiving for the rich bounty of field and orchard, of hive and fold and byre; a joyful season of home-coming, a festival of patriotic celebration; above all, a national offertory of praise to the Almighty for all His benefits and loving kindnesses—the Feast of Tabernacles, brightest and gladdest holiday in the entire year. "Now he who has not seen this festival," say the rabbis, "does not know what joy means."

Quietly the Master made his appearance; the third morning of the festal period found him teaching in the eastern colonnade known as Solomon's Porch, sole remnant of the magnificent Temple built by David's son and successor. And, as ever, he spoke as one having authority for all that he had but little formal education. For be it remembered that to the Jews there was only one sort of learning—theology—and only one means by which its science could be acquired—the rabbinical schools. Yet here was Jesus declaring: "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine."

How strange this assertion! that reconciliation between the creature and the Creator depends not on right thinking about God, but on right action—the doing of God's will. There was the Law and there were also the innumerable expositions which the scribes and doctors had heaped upon it. Yet Jesus had the audacity to proclaim that the active agency of salvation was not the alert and subtle mind, but the humble and believing heart. The willingness to do God's will; yes, it was as simple as that.

I noticed Joel weaving his devious way through the crowd, always whispering and with many sidelong glances at the Master. I understood what he was about as plainly as though overhearing his actual speech; unquestionably he was urging that Iesus should be arrested and brought before the Council of the Sanhedrin. But Joel met with small success in his intrigue. Apparently no one cared to be the first to lay violent hands upon Jesus; moreover, there were many in the assembly, free sons of Israel from far-off lands, who had none of the subserviency to the official hierarchy which was so characteristic of the priestridden citizens of Jerusalem. These Jews had been deeply impressed by the person and teaching of Jesus; they were even inclined to believe in him and in his mission. One man, a merchant from Teheran, resplendent in crimson silk robes and evidently a person of importance, appeared to voice the general feeling when he said aloud: "When Christ cometh, will he do more miracles than these which this man hath done?"

Joel slunk away, discomfited and biting his nails, and there seemed to be no disposition on the part of the Sadducean police officers to take any active steps against the Master; accordingly Jesus resumed his teaching and the telling of those wonderful little stories which never failed to arouse and keep the attention of the multitude.

It appeared certain that nothing untoward would happen on this particular morning. The Master's hour, as he said himself, had not yet come, and the people were continuing to hear him gladly. And so I determined to return to my lodgings in the upper city, intending to prepare despatches for my factor in Cana regarding the marketing of our olive harvest and the letting of some pieces of arable land to tenant farmers. Accordingly I hunted up Philip, and asked him to acquaint the Master

with the reason of my temporary absence.

Crossing the magnificent bridge which spans the deep ravine of the Tyrophœon, I made my way to the northern quarter of the city. Not far from the castle of Antonia stands an hostel kept by a Greek named Phormio. The place had a reputation for its excellent viands and vintages; in consequence, it was frequented by officers of the Roman garrison, civil officials of the Procurator's court, and fashionable idlers in general; even Gentile women of the upper classes who held themselves superior to our old-fashioned eastern convention and did not hesitate to appear in public whenever the whim seized them.

Just as I was passing the entrance to Phormio's establishment my progress was momentarily barred by the arrival of a palanquin or canopied litter. Usually these conveyances are intended for one person only, but this particular carriage accommodated two occupants, and it took six sturdy slaves to transport its not inconsiderable weight.

Two women had stepped out of the litter, and we met face to face: the Lady Claudia and Lilli. The latter was attired in the dress of a Roman maiden of rank with her hair coiffed after the western mode; she wore no veil, but a peacock fan held over her by a serving-maid protected her delicate skin from the direct rays of the sun.

The recognition on Lilli's part was also immediate, but for the moment no word was said; we stared at one another like

two tongue-tied children.

Lilli, being a woman, was the first to recover herself. "Well met, my Nathanael!" she exclaimed. "If it be really you!" she continued, gazing curiously at my attire, the simple dress of a Galilæan peasant and so markedly different from the somewhat foppish apparel which, following upon my long residence abroad, I had formerly affected. Lilli turned to her companion. "This is my cousin, Nathanael Bar-Talmai," she explained.

The Lady Claudia favoured me with an expansive smile. "Any friend of my dear Veronica is welcome," she said graciously. But I noticed that she ignored the blood relationship; Lilli was now a Roman woman by the legal process of adoption, and there must be no recognition of old racial ties. Whereupon Lilli laughed mutinously. "My cousin," she repeated. "And he looks distressingly thin and pale—perhaps hungry."

he looks distressingly thin and pale—perhaps hungry."

"That sad condition may be easily assuaged," answered Claudia. "And here comes Phormio himself to prescribe the

cure," she added as the proprietor of the house sidled up, bowing low before the great lady. The two talked in a rapid undertone.

"There is a consignment of carp received this very hour by camel post from the Sea of Tiberias," announced the Lady Claudia. "Stewed in fresh olive oil, they make a dish which the Imperator himself might survey with a watering mouth. And then a batch of those little cakes of date flour and honey for which Phormio's cook is so justly famous. Delicious! Have no fear, my Veronica; the speedy resuscitation of your old-time comrade is already assured. Phormio understands the situation

and that is enough, more than enough. Bene!"

Without clearly realizing what was happening, I found myself in the hostelry, edged along by the obsequious, round-bellied Phormio in the wake of the two ladies. But hardly had we been seated than Claudia espied a feminine acquaintance across the room, and forthwith proceeded to join her friend. I watched the handsome, portly figure of the Procurator's consort sweeping across the floor with the stately progress of a swan on some placid lake starred by blue clusters of the water hyacinth: nay, here was something more than even the majestic advance of the royal bird of Aphrodite; this was rather the vision of some great, triple-banked war trireme ploughing the multitudinous deep, flaunting oriflammes of multi-coloured silk, dazzlingly armoured in gold and jewels. In sober truth, just the accustomed pattern of a Roman patrician lady, but she might have suggested to Vergil his famous simile: the goddess betrayed by her walk.

Lilli looked at me. "It is a long time since we parted," she

began. "Is it true that your mother—"

I nodded.

"I am sorry!" For the briefest moment her hand covered mine. "And you," she continued, "do you still follow Jesus of Nazareth?"

"Yes."

"He is a great teacher and a doer of mighty works. But I wonder, I wonder—" Her eyes clouded.

"I suppose," I began in my turn, "that Uncle Joseph is again

occupying his town house. And lonely-perhaps."

"My sister Esther is with him, and I daresay that she takes better care of our father than ever I did."

"Then you are happy in your new life and changed estate?"

"The Lady Claudia is kindness itself, and one can breathe more freely up there in the Prætorium. It is the greater world and the larger life—why should I not be happy at escaping from the iron cage against whose bars every Jewish maiden flutters her

wings in vain."

There was a flush on Lilli's cheek and a glitter in her eye as though daring me to take exception to her words. And yetcuriously enough—the impression remained with me that she was arguing to convince herself rather than me. Strange creatures, these women!

The Lady Claudia rejoined us; the great galleon of my fancy describing a magnificent curve towards the haven of our distant corner, and then dropping a metaphorical anchor amidst a resounding clatter of neck and wrist and ankle chains—the always

impressive spectacle of a ship come safely into port.

The great lady cast an enviously appraising eye on the substantial portions of the feast, but heroically contented herself with nibbling at some salted Persian nuts; later, she ventured upon the half of a melon. With a gracious sincerity, she suggested that I should consider myself an always welcome guest at the Prætorium. "Any day or hour that you may find convenient," she added.

I stammered my gratitude—and my regrets. "You know," I explained, "that I follow Jesus of Nazareth——"

"The worker of wonders, the great teacher?" interrupted the Lady Claudia.

"Yes, and therefore I am no longer my own master. Whenever he needs me, I feel that I must be standing close at hand."

"A hard service," she commented.

"But a joyous one," I answered. "Nor would I seek to change it for any other on earth. For to be with Jesus is to learn of him."

The Lady Claudia nodded. "It must be marvellous," she said. "The most wonderful thing in life—to hear such a call. And then be strong enough to obey it. But I fear it is not for me --- " She broke off and stared abstractedly out of the window.

I made my farewell to my hostess; somewhat to my surprise, Lilli accompanied me to the door. "Has it ever occurred to you," she asked, "to reconsider your decision—I mean on the proposal made by my father: your becoming the family representative in the priesthood?"

"I had thought that question settled—finally."

"Why finally? We make mistakes—all of us. I myself" she boggled a trifle over the words and a slight flush tinged her cheek—"may have been hasty in despising my Jewish birthright. But it is not too late to repair my fault. I can relinquish my legal status as an adopted daughter of Rome as easily as I can doff the outward evidences of that estate—stola, pella, and ricinium (robe, mantle, and veil). Merely a turn of the hand and the deed is accomplished." She raised her eyes to mine, and there was a dancing light in them, which both startled and confused me.

"You mean," I began haltingly, "that you would return to your father's house, pick up the threads of your old life, for-swear that greater world, that freer air of which you spoke a moment ago—you mean this, all of this?"

"Yes."

"And without regret? No lingering, backward look?"

"Never. If I have made a mistake, I am ready to retrace my

steps. Can you say as much, my Nathanael?"

"But I am not conscious of being in error," I protested. "I became Jesus' disciple of my own free choice, and I continue to follow him. Do I make myself clear?"

"Yes, quite clear," answered Lilli, and her voice sounded flat and dull. "But I wanted you to know." A quick turn, a flutter

of draperies, and she was gone.

I walked on deep in thought. Lilli had wanted me to know—what? And then, in a flash, I understood.

"If any man (so spake the Master) come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, * * * yea, and his own life also,

he cannot be my disciple."

Well, had I not met the test laid down by Jesus—the giving up of material possessions, the ease of a sheltered life, the promise of a great career, a mother's dear companionship, the natural human desire for a home, a mate, children—all for his sake? And then I forced myself to look more closely into the springs of my behaviour. Included in my renunciation was Lilli. What if I had known then what I know now? A confession! And a confession all the more unmistakable by reason of its indirection, the feminine method of approach from time immemorial.

Now that I did know, what was to be my course of action? Truly Jesus had promised a dazzling reward to his followers: an hundredfold guerdon of earthly blessings; and, in the world to come, life everlasting. But, for the present, I wanted only one thing—Lilli. And the future held no meaning for me unless it included—Lilli. Everlasting life? But if that served only to per-

petuate an eternal regret—what a mockery!

Even now I could retrace my steps. I could take Lilli at her word, accept the career offered by my uncle Joseph, abandon the

cause which the Master himself was rendering more hopeless day by day, make the most of what life and love have to offer; in short, play the part of a man of sense and sensibility. Yes, I could do all these things.

By this time I had reached the intersection of two streets; if I turned on my heel, the hostelry of Phormio would still be in

sight.

"No man (so spake the Master) having put his hand to the plough, and looking backward, is fit for the kingdom of God."

Sudden rebellion flooded my soul. "But I do not want to be made fit for this kingdom of God!" I cried aloud. "I will not, I will not!"

Yet, in the very next instant, I had turned that corner from which no further backward look was possible. How to account for this denial of my natural, my most imperious, instincts? Why

must this too be required of me?

There can be but one explanation. "Whence knowest thou me?" I had demanded of Jesus on the occasion of our first meeting in Cana of Galilee. And the Master had answered: "Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee."

Ah, yes, he who knew what is in man had known what was in me. All unconscious of that prevision and foreknowledge, I had risen from my seat under the fig tree, and had hastened to see this good thing come out of Nazareth. And once in the presence of Jesus, there could be but the one unalterable certainty; this was my Master and I was his man.

Nay, I could not turn back even to see again that dancing light

in Lilli's eyes.

Having written my despatches, I again sallied forth, seeking the means of forwarding them to Cana. Fortunately I encountered an Edomite acquaintance whose caravan, laden with corn from Egypt, was departing on the morrow for the seaport of Acco. Our business was quickly concluded; and, since the day was fast drawing to a close, I turned my steps towards the Temple area with the intention of rejoining the Master and my comrades.

The tall, soldierly figure of Lucius Sylla Verus broke through the press of idlers and bystanders; he hailed me with a warm friendliness shaded by a gentle rebuke for my tardiness in seeking him out at the citadel. "You know, Nathanael, that you promised me-faithfully," he ended; he looked with ill-concealed surprise at my faded and travel-stained attire.

"It is not so astonishing," I protested. "I still follow Jesus

of Nazareth, and naturally I share his poverty; the disciple cannot be above his Master."

Lucius insisted that I should accompany him to a neighbouring vintner's where he ordered wine and plied me with a thousand questions. I answered with as much brevity as politeness would allow. Verus spoke casually of Lilli, but I managed to evade that issue without great difficulty, since my friend's particular interest seemed to centre on my association with the Master. "I saw him myself to-day," he remarked.

"When and where?"

"Only a few minutes ago; I was passing through the Temple area. It was growing late and the Court of the Gentiles was almost deserted. Then I caught sight of your Nazarene rabbi. He was standing in Solomon's Porch, and he was surrounded by half a score doctors of the Law and scribes, including that fat little hairless horror whom they call Joel. There was much waving of arms and bursts of speech; impelled by curiosity, I sauntered over to learn what the excitement was about.

"There was still another figure in the group, that of a woman. She was crouched upon the pavement in a posture of abasement, her unbound hair streaming down her shoulders and her face

buried in her hands.

"Joel was speaking. 'Nazarene,' he said, 'this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses in the law commanded us that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou?'"

"It was a trap!" I exclaimed. "What did Jesus answer?"
"Nothing at all," said Verus. "He stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not.

"But the woman's accusers persisted. 'What sayest thou?' again demanded Joel. Whereupon Jesus rose to his full stature and retorted: 'He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.' And again he stooped down, and wrote on the ground."

"Perfect!" I ejaculated. "And then?"

"One by one they slipped away in silence. And Joel was the first to go." Verus laughed as he recalled the dramatic scene. "One by one," he repeated, "until at last Jesus was left alone with the woman. You must know, Nathanael, that I was standing behind one of the great pillars of the colonnade where I could both see and hear without my presence being suspected.

"'Woman, where are thine accusers?' he asked. 'Hath no man condemned thee?' The woman cast a swift glance about her. 'No man, Lord,' she answered. 'Neither do I condemn thee: go and sin no more,' was the final word of your Jesus.

Whereupon the woman made him a deep obeisance, and disappeared in the forest of stone pillars. When again I looked around, Jesus, too, had taken his departure. That is all. But a great story, my Nathanael."

Truly so, and I wish I had been there.

"Yet I don't quite grasp your master's viewpoint," mused Verus. "Now among us Romans adultery is merely an offence against property; a man's wife is his exclusive possession, and our law will assess substantial damages if his marital rights are infringed. But, by your Jewish code, adultery is a sin against Yahveh and must be atoned for; it is even punishable by death. Why then should Jesus condone the transgression? Is he superior to that sacred thing which you call the Law? How can he venture to defy its condemnation and abrogate its penalties?"

"Ah, Lucius, that is just where the Master takes eternal issue with the literalists and the formalists. Not that Jesus takes no account of the weaknesses of the flesh. Remember that in telling

the woman to go, he yet warned her to sin no more."

"Precisely. But—"
"Perhaps," I interrupted, "I can make Jesus' position clearer by viewing it from another angle. Many and severe are the Master's denunciations of offences that are not even mentioned in the Law-I mean such things as hypocrisy, intolerance, hatred, pride of place, envy, oppression of the poor, selfishness of every kind and degree. Yes, it was upon the doers of these deeds that Jesus poured out the vials of his utmost wrath: 'Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell!

"Here is Jesus' moral code, as I understand it. The sins of the body are truly sins; but, as the vital forces diminish, the lusts of the flesh grow steadily weaker, and when the corporeal existence comes to an end, these passions expire with it; indeed it may even be that desire shall die before the body does. But the sins of the spirit persist into eternity along with the soul that gave them birth."

"And you a Sadducean!" chided Verus. "Do you not hold that a resurrection from the dead is not even conceivable?"

"That is my inherited philosophy," I admitted. "But the Master, in his every act and word, teaches that life goes on beyond the grave; moreover, since that future life is the only real one, nothing matters save the remoulding of the earthly nature to the heavenly pattern."

"Ah, Nathanael, you can believe that! I envy you."

"I did not say so. Can you not understand that there is a

perpetual conflict going on within me? Always I waver between my pride of intellect and the growing conviction that there is something in the wisdom of Jesus which cannot be found in the shady groves of the Athenian sages or in the noisy schools of the Alexandrian philosophers."

"A struggle—yes. How will it end?"
"Frankly, my Lucius, I do not know."

"You do not know! How can you endure such uncer-

tainty?"

"Ah, but I do know Jesus of Nazareth—at least in part. And therefore I continue to walk with him if only from hour to hour. Perchance, some day, I shall come to know him even as also I am known."

The dusk had fallen and we parted. Verus took his way to the fortress, and I, the Temple area having long since been closed, returned to my place of lodgement.*

*The story of the woman taken in adultery is not related by Matthew, Mark, or Luke. Nor does it appear in the original MS. of John's Gospel, although I have seen a late copy of the Fourth Evangel in which the episode is written on the margin of the sheet; perhaps some still later copyist may see fit to include it in the body of the Johannine text. Moreover, it must be admitted that, from the strictly Jewish standpoint, there are inconsistencies and improbabilities in the narrative which are difficult to explain. Why should the woman have been brought before Jesus at all; where were the legal witnesses of her sin; could such a public examination and trial have taken place in the Temple precincts; were these scribes and Pharisees so ignorant of the Law as to have substituted stoning for strangulation, the proper penalty for the offence of adultery? Yes, here is a perfect maze of blind passages and dead ends; the external evidence militates decidedly against the story's authenticity.

And yet I am setting down the occurrence in my own narrative exactly as I heard it; and for two reasons. In the first place, there is my informant, Lucius Verus, who as a Roman would not be conversant with the finer points of our Jewish jurisprudence; he might have been mistaken quite honestly about the details of the incident; he may even have misunderstood the exact nature of the charge brought against the woman and her legal status. Nevertheless, Verus was my intimate friend and that of many years

standing; he could have had no motive in deceiving me.

Secondly, I accept the story because it reveals the distinctive quality in the precept and practice of the Master; this is Jesus Himself, driving to the heart of the matter, separating the essential from the non-essential, the principle from the formula, the eternal from the temporal, the spirit from the letter of the Law. Moses from Mount Sinai thunders forth the fiat of justice: sin must be punished; Jesus, exalting to the full His mediatorial office, seeks the saving of the sinner.

And so, in the last analysis, the story of the woman taken in adultery proves itself; here is the revelation of the very fatherhood of God, God who is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

The story of the woman taken in adultery—O miracle of grace! Not alone a credible addition to our knowledge of the Master's earthly ministry, but the very core and centre of His everlasting Gospel: the guilty soul washed white in the blood of that immaculate Lamb that taketh away the sins of the world.

XIX

THE POOL OF SILOAM

T will be recalled that the Master was on terms of intimate friendship with the members of a well-to-do family—Lazarus and his sisters, Mary and Martha—who lived in Bethany, a village lying some three miles southeast of Jerusalem. Almost invariably Jesus lodged with these Bethany friends when visiting the Holy City, and he had gone to them immediately upon his arrival from Galilee to attend the Feast of Tabernacles: we, the disciples, finding our own quarters in the upper town.

As always, the Master was warmly welcomed. Martha, a handsome, middle-aged woman, was generally regarded as the head of the family; the house was "her house," as Luke puts it. The property was really owned in common by the two sisters and their younger brother Lazarus; but Martha was of a naturally dominating disposition, and her will-to-power met with but little opposition from the other members of the household; it were easier to go with Martha than against her, and vessels of fragile clay have no business to be sailing the turbulent current of life in company with an iron pot.

Neither Martha nor Lazarus had ever married; Lazarus, shy and dreamy of temperament, being almost a recluse from social life, while Martha's aggressive personality was a storm warning which no masculine eye could fail to see or disregard. Many a married man does wear the feminine collar, but it is safe to assert that no hint of its existence is ever vouchsafed during the probationary period of courtship; as the Preacher reminds us, "Surely in vain the net is spread in the sight of any bird."

Mary, the youngest of the trio, had suffered a most unfortunate experience. In her youth—a very beautiful and charming youth—she had met a Cypriote Greek, a fascinating but unprincipled man. He persuaded Mary to run away with him, and then followed the old and sadly familiar tale of satiated passion, growing indifference, and heartless desertion. Mary, penniless and friendless, had no recourse but to return to her kindred; and Martha, to her eternal credit, received the erring one without a word of reproach and bade her resume her accustomed place in the Bethany household. Fortunately there had

been no visible fruit of the unhappy union, and Mary could slip back into her old life with the minimum of effort; the tongues of the neighbours might wag, but not within the hearing of Martha. During the years that followed her disastrous flight into the world of romance, Mary had recovered her physical poise, but her mental attitude continued to be marked by a meditative melancholy and an unconquerable reserve. Martha might fume and scold, declaring that Mary chose out of sheer perversity to wear the willow of her disgrace, and that public opinion could be changed only by out-braving it. But Mary, while grateful for her sister's militant championship, could not be induced to take the field in her own behalf; upon the bed which she had made, she would continue to lie; in the background to which a hard fate had condemned her, she would steadfastly remain.

A strangely diversified household, but an interesting one; moreover, the Master was accustomed to find at Bethany—and only there—the infrequent intervals for rest and refreshment which he could venture to snatch from the stress of daily living. And so it is not surprising that, as John tells us, "Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus." Yes, the visit of the Master, coinciding as it did with the joyous Feast of Tabernacles,

brought pleasure to both hosts and guest.

Jesus found that the ritual observance of the festival had been carefully followed by his Bethany friends. In the courtyard of "her house" Martha had caused to be erected a booth of leafy boughs for the private occupancy of the honoured visitor, and also a much larger structure of the same sort in which the whole household would assemble throughout the week to eat, to study, and to pray—in short, to live in actual commemoration of Is-

rael's pilgrim days.

Jesus was resting in the great booth through whose open front streamed the coolness of the autumn breezes, while Mary, wholly oblivious of mundane considerations, sat at his feet and listened to the words proceeding out of his mouth. Martha, intent upon the cares of hospitality, felt aggrieved; there was the midday meal to be prepared, and the servants seemed unusually inept in the discharge of their duties. Finally Martha, chafing at the interminable mistakes and delays, red-faced from her exertions in driving her clumsy servitors, "cumbered about much serving," could bear it no longer. Breaking in upon her guest and sister, both of whom appeared unmindful of the domestic crisis, she exclaimed: "Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? Bid her therefore that she help me."

"Martha, Martha," answered Jesus, "thou art careful and

troubled about many things: but one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her."

Of course, I was not present at this actual scene, and I have only Luke's narrative to go by. But certain inferences may be drawn; read, as it were, between the lines.

Evidently the Master had not been unmindful of Martha's claim to consideration; he had been fully aware of her many harassing duties and troubling cares. And all that Martha really

expected was a decent appreciation of her efforts.

Martha was actually beginning to plume herself upon the Master's recognition of her zeal, but his next words shattered her self-complacency. According to Jesus, only one thing was really needful: that was the willingness to be taught by the Great Teacher. It were the better part to learn of him than to acquire unapproachable dexterity in the serving of tables. An uncompromising judgment, but there was no sting in its personal application; I can fancy that immediately Martha laid aside her napkin and bunch of jingling keys, and sat down with Mary at the Master's feet.

Who but Jesus could teach a much-needed lesson and yet without giving offence? What was the secret of his method? Surely that is embodied in John's statement, "Now Jesus loved Martha"; yes, and just as truly as he cared for the more appealing Mary and the gentle-minded Lazarus. No one could lay down the law to Martha. But, equally so, not even Martha, superbly confident of herself and claiming the right to rule the lives of others, could make more than a gesture of contention against the power of love.

Says Luke: "Now it came to pass, as they went, that he entered into a certain village; and a certain woman named Martha

received him into her house."

"Martha received him into her house." Ah, but where Jesus once enters, there he remains—the master of that house.

It was the last and great day of the Feast of Tabernacles. At daybreak the pilgrims, all in festive array, had left their leafy booths for the ceremonies at the Temple. Each man carried in his right hand the so-called *lulabl*, consisting of a myrtle and a willow branch tied together, and with a palm branch in the middle. This was decreed in supposed compliance with the directions set down in the book Leviticus: "Ye shall take you * * * the boughs of goodly trees, branches of palm trees, and the boughs of thick trees, and willows of the brook; and ye shall re-

joice before the Lord your God seven days." Also, in the left hand, each worshipper bore the ethrog, a species of citrus fruit

commonly called the Paradise Apple.

On arriving at the Temple area, the pilgrims were divided into three sections. One band would proceed to Moza, a hamlet a mile or so away, to cut down willow branches for the adornment of the Altar. The second division would remain in the Temple to attend the preparation of the morning sacrifice. A third company would go in procession to the southeastern angle of the city where the ravine of the Tyropheon merges into the Kidron valley. Here was the so-called Fountain Gate and, situated close at hand, lay the Pool of Siloam, the latter fed by a living spring formerly known as En-Rogel.

The priest who headed the procession would fill his golden pitcher from the waters of Siloam. The company would then return to the Temple, timing its arrival to coincide with the laying of the sacrificial pieces on the Altar of Burnt-offering. Welcomed by a threefold blast of trumpets, the priest bearing the pitcher of water would enter through the portal of the Water Gate, and pass into the Court of the Priests where he would be joined by another officiant who carried the wine for the drinkoffering; together they would ascend the steps of the Altar and turn sharply to the left. Here were two silver funnels with narrow conduits leading down through the Altar base to the virgin rock below, the eastern one intended for the reception of the wine and the western one for the water.

Having met with several delays on the way, I had been late in arriving at the ceremony, but I was fortunate enough to gain a place in the forefront of the worshippers. There was a tense expectancy in the air as the priest who carried the golden pitcher stepped forward. For there had been a bitter dispute between the Sadducees and the more strictly orthodox party regarding this rite of water-pouring; was it an ordinance actually instituted by Moses, or was it not? On a previous occasion a Sadducean High Priest had flouted tradition by pouring the sacred water on the ground instead of into the funnel; whereupon a riot had broken out resulting in the death of many people.

Fortunately there was no departure to-day from the accustomed ritual. Holding the pitcher high up, so that all could see what he was doing, the High Priest poured the water into the silver funnel on the west side. Instantly the tension passed. The congregation burst into the responsive chanting of the great hallel and, with the singing of the closing line, "O give thanks unto the Lord," each pilgrim shook towards the Altar the lulabl

held in his hand in token of praise to the Almighty for the ful-

fillment of His promises to Israel.

The sound of many voices had died away and there was a great silence. A moment later that silence was broken; the Master standing on the steps of the Upper Gate, where he could be seen and heard both in the Court of Israel and in the Court of the Women, was speaking, and the melodious tones of his voice carried to the farthest corner of the vast enclosure. And this is what he said: "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water."

Again a sighing silence, followed by a babel of voices. "This is the Christ!" shouted one man. "Shall Christ come out of Galilee?" sneered another. "Hath not the scripture said, That Christ cometh of the seed of David, and out of the town of Beth-

lehem, where David was?" put in a third disputant.

The wrangling grew in intensity and the chief priests and Pharisees alike were troubled, fearing that the quarrel might bring about the dreaded intervention of the Roman military. From where I stood I could see that Jesus, surrounded by Peter, Simon Zelotes, and Philip, had taken his departure. But still the tumult continued, and the officers of the Temple had much ado to keep the controversialists in check. But, finally, the assembly, realizing that the man who had spoken such disturbing words was no longer within sight or call, grumblingly consented to disperse, each man going to his own house; the great space remained void and empty.

Enos, the youthful commander of the Temple guard, appeared before his superiors to make his report; he looked hot and worried; Hananiah took it upon himself to speak. "Why have ye not brought him?" he demanded. Enos looked Hananiah straight in the eye. "Never man spake like this man," he answered. Hananiah, quite taken aback, could only gesticulate and mutter in his beard. But Joel took up the gage of battle. "Are ye also deceived?" he screeched. "Have any of the rulers of Pharisees believed on him? But this people who knoweth not

the law are cursed."

There was another pregnant pause. Then an elderly, undistinguished-looking man edged forward, and I recognized him as Nicodemus, a member of the Great Council of the Sanhedrin, the same who had come secretly and by night to Jesus after the first Passover of the Master's ministry. Timidly he made his plea for a decent tolerance: "Doth our law judge any man, before it hear him, and know what he doeth?" Contemptuously

Joel spat back at him: "Art thou also of Galilee? Search and look: for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet." Nicodemus had nothing more to say, and, after some further aimless and futile further argument, Hananiah and his supporters also went their way.

His time was not yet come.

It was the evening of the last and greatest day of the Feast of Tabernacles. The Temple area, and particularly the Court of the Women, had been illuminated more lavishly than ever in honour of the official closing of the festival week. Golden candelabra flung their beams of light in every direction, to be reinforced by the radiance of flaming torches borne by the pilgrims and worshippers; and once more the people raised their voices in triumphal strain: "O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good,

for his mercy endureth forever."

A slim feminine figure standing in a dim corner of the Court of the Women attracted my eye. She was heavily veiled and garbed in an all-enveloping black robe; but when she put forth a hand to draw the garment more closely about her, I caught the dull gleam of gold. That bracelet; fashioned in the form of a double uræus, the hooded asp, is the symbol of Egyptian royalty and nominally sacred to the person of the Pharaohs! Yes, I knew it well, that exquisitely wrought circlet with the twin serpent heads crossed upon each other so as to form an elastic linkage at the wrist. Doubtless it had been part of the loot from the valley of the Kings, the royal Egyptian necropolis, and Lilli had bought it from an itinerant Coptic trader. Uncle Joseph had viewed its acquisition with distaste, the snake being one of the accepted emblems of Satan, enemy of mankind. But Lilli had been obstinate and had continued to wear it as one of her favorite pieces of personal adornment. There could be no doubt that the veiled woman was Lilli, but it was not for me to approach and accost her. For what purpose had she come alone to the Temple? Could it be that, despite her adoption by Claudia Procula, Lilli again desired to see the Master and listen to his teaching?

Now the festivities and ceremonies had reached their climactic close. The chanting of the tremendous hallelujah of praises ceased, one by one the torches were being extinguished and thrown on the pavement, and the innumerable candles were beginning to gutter in their sockets; soon this artificial day would come to its appointed end and the Feast of Tabernacles would be

over.

I saw Jesus plain: he stood motionless as though waiting for something to happen; ah! it must be for the final and complete darkness that now succeeded—darkness and silence. And then the Master spoke.

"I am the light of the world," said Jesus. "He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."

Was it pure imagination that the face and person of Jesus still seemed visible, the one luminous point in the obscurity that engulfed us? And then I realized that the new day had come and that its gathering rays were focussed on that white-robed figure standing at the exact spot upon which the fingers of the dawn would first be laid. Bold indeed had been the Master's pronouncement, but Nature had been quick to place her seal upon his incredible assumption. "I am the light of the world," cries Jesus, and immediately in our ears comes the rustle of the wings of the morning; behold! it is day.

The Master moved away, and, passing through the Gate Beautiful, entered the Court of the Gentiles lying open to the now steadily lightening sky. The crowd followed as one man, and the priestly party had no recourse but to do likewise. Jostled by the throng, I found myself carried towards Solomon's Porch on the east side of the court; looking back, I caught sight of Jesus standing on the low stone terrace that flanked the Gate of Nicanor. John was with him, but none of the other disciples could I discover. But deep in the background, immediately behind Jesus, I made out the black-robed figure of my cousin Lilli.

Since the Court of the Women formed part of the Temple proper, the common people could not take an active part in the discussion over the Master and his daring words. But here, in the Court of the Gentiles, any man might raise his voice and he would not be slow to do so; weaving ceaselessly through the crowd went Joel bawling out objurgations against this Jesus, disturber of Israel's peace.

Once more the Master was speaking, and even Joel stopped with the rest to listen. "When ye have lifted up the Son of man," began Jesus, "then shall ye know that I am he * * * and he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him. * * * If ye continue in my word * * * ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

Joel pushed his way to the front. "We be Abraham's seed," he asserted, "and were never in bondage to any man: how say-

est thou, 'Ye shall be made free'?"

"Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin," answered

Jesus. "And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever. I know that ye are Abraham's seed; but ye seek to kill me, because my word hath no place in you."

The crowd spoke as though with one voice. "Abraham is our

father," they shouted.

"If ye were Abraham's children," came the Master's retort, "ye would do the works of Abraham. But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God: this did not Abraham. Ye do the deeds of your father."

"We have one Father, even God," countered Joel.

"If God were your Father," persisted Jesus, "ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God. * * * Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. * * * Which of you convinceth me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me?"

Joel writhed. "Say we not well," he thundered, "that thou

art a Samaritan, and hast a devil?"

"I have not a devil; but I honour my Father, and ye do dishonour me. And I seek not my own glory." The Master halted momentarily and his brilliant eyes swept over the closely packed multitude; not a man spoke or stirred.

"Verily, verily," continued Jesus, "I say unto you, If a man

keep my saying, he shall never see death."

"Now we know that thou hast a devil," triumphed Joel. "Abraham is dead, and the prophets are dead. * * * Art thou greater than our father Abraham * * * whom makest thou thyself?"

"If I honour myself," answered the Master, "my honour is nothing: it is my Father that honoureth me; of whom ye say, that he is your God. * * * Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad."

"Thou art not yet fifty years old," sneered Joel, "and hast

thou seen Abraham?"

"Before Abraham was, I am," answered Jesus.

"Blasphemy! Blasphemy!" shouted Joel. "Stones! stones!" came the cry from every quarter. Men bent to pick up cobbles from the gutter, or strove to displace the flat paving of the court.

I tried to make my way through the mass of struggling people, but I might as well have essayed to push down a wall of solid brick. I noticed that John had placed himself in front of the Master, but what was one arm against an army! Impotently raging, I continued to push and claw my way, but I could make little discernible progress.

Lilli, gliding forward, succeeded in attracting the attention of the Master. She pointed significantly behind her, and I guessed what she had in mind—a certain small postern set in the masonry wall that surrounds the Court of the Women. And this door, as I happened to remember, gave entrance to a secret labyrinth which finally communicated with the passage leading to the Gate Tadi on the north side of the Temple enclosure. With a slight inclination of the head, Jesus passed behind Lilli, entered the postern, and disappeared from sight. Lilli immediately locked the door, and hid the ponderous key in the folds of her robe.

Now the wolves, with Joel at the head of the pack, were upon Lilli. John tried to interpose, but was swept aside. And I, hemmed in by the crowd, could move neither hand nor foot.

"The key, woman!" shouted Joel. "Give me the key!" And when Lilli made no motion to comply with the order, Joel tore the veil from her head and struck her-five finger-marks stood out redly on that fair face! Then, seizing her right wrist, he gave it a violent wrench. The key clattered on the pavement, and Joel bent to pick it up. But before he could retrieve it came the tramp of armed and disciplined men. Down from the castle of Antonia marched a cohort of Roman soldiers led by Lucius Sylla Verus in person. With their short pikes at the level, the legionaries ploughed their course through the closely packed multitude as easily as a war galley parts the waves of the stormy Ægean. Doubtless the sentries on the ramparts had kept close watch upon the growing disturbance in the Court of the Gentiles; and when the mob started to tear up the flagging of the enclosure, Verus decided that it was time to intervene. His quick eye caught sight of Lilli struggling in the hands of Joel, and, of course, he recognized her instantly: Lady Claudia Procula's intimate friend and also a Roman maiden by legal adoption—what an outrage!

It was all over in a few seconds. The quivering heap that was Joel lay at the foot of the steps, and Verus was escorting Lilli to the protection of the fortress. There was nothing left to worry about, for, with the advent of the military, the great court

emptied itself as though by necromancy.

I ran forward and met John. He had a cut lip, but had suffered no serious damage from his clash with Joel's supporters. Yet the blackness of night clouded the countenance of the "Son of Thunder"; he was so angry that naught but incoherent exclamations passed his lips.

The key of the postern lay on the ground where it had been dropped by Lilli. I seized it, unlocked the door, and entered.

John followed silently. Quickly we threaded our way through the labyrinth and made our exit by the Gate Tadi. Arrived at the chamber which we shared in common, we sat down, still in silence.

John continued angry by reason of the manhandling he had endured from Joel and his followers, but I was in no mood to sympathize with him. One disturbing thought clouded my mind—were there not some grounds, some warrant, for the resentment displayed by the crowd? I wondered.

John looked inquiringly into my downcast face. "What is

it?" he asked.

"You heard what the Master said," I burst out. "Something so incredible! 'Before Abraham was, I am.'"

" Well? "

"Surely you see the significance of such an utterance. I AM has always been regarded as the Almighty's most solemn, most sacred title. As when Moses declared to the children of Israel: 'I AM hath sent me unto you.' Yet Jesus says: 'Before Abraham was, I am.' What do you understand by that assertion?"

John did not answer.

"I may be a worldly minded Sadducee," I continued, "but I know and revere the fundamental tenet of our faith: 'The Lord our God is one Lord.' Nor can I forget the very first of the Commandments given from Mount Sinai: 'Thou shalt have no other gods before me.'"

And still John said no word.

"I may despise Hananiah and Joel, and their pietistic crew, but that is an issue which touches the very heart of the religion of Jewry. How can the Master, even he, claim the honour and dignity which belong to God alone?" I hesitated. "Was it indeed blasphemy?" I hardly breathed the question.

"I am sure of only one thing," answered John. "I know that Jesus will prove himself—whoever or whatever he may be."

"I wish I could believe that. But I cannot."

"Do you mean that from henceforth you will walk no more with him?"

I stiffened angrily. "I think that the Master made a mistake in raising such a controversy," I said at length. "But I will tell you this, John son of Zebedee—I would rather be wrong with Jesus than right with every doctor and lawyer and scribe and Pharisee and priest in all Israel."

And at that we had to leave it.

One other important incident of this visit to the Holy City

remains to be noted. On the Sabbath following the festival week, a young beggar—hardly more than a boy in years—sat near one of the Temple gates, mutely beseeching alms. And, as John tells us, "Jesus passed by."

Turning back, Jesus looked at him and saw that he was blind. Yes, blind from the very day of his birth, as the bystanders were

ready to inform the Master.

James Major, with his accustomed fondness for dialectic, was quick to ask: "Master, who did sin, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"

But Jesus answered—so surprisingly: "Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him."

We gathered around, and watched as the Master anointed the eyes of the young man with clay made into a paste with spittle. Nothing remarkable about this, since saliva is commonly reputed to be a valuable remedy in diseases of the eye. Then the Master told the blind beggar man to go and wash in the Pool of Siloam. The youth bowed silent assent, and Jesus, having already attended the morning sacrifice at the Temple, returned with his disciples to our lodgings in the upper city. I lingered behind for a moment, observing the sightless man as he took his staff and tapped his slow way along the street, going down through the steep, narrow bazaars that led from the Temple hill to the famous reservoir constructed by King Hezekiah.

"I am going to follow him," whispered James Major in my ear as he quietly separated himself from our company. And again I experienced an indefinable interest in the welfare of this

nameless and unfortunate youth.

Two hours later, I returned to the Temple area and there met

James.

"The young man finally reached the Pool of Siloam," recounted James, "and proceeded to wash the dried clay from his eyelids. Then he opened them and stared about him in the wildest amazement; for the first time in his life he was using the

sense of sight.

"For the time being he was so frightened that he dared not move. Within arm's length of where he stood ran a low wall, and on its upper course lay an 'Adonis' stone, which someone had placed there and forgotten. You know what I mean, an egg-shaped bit of sandstone dyed to its heart with a deep crimson stain like to newly shed blood. These 'Adonis' stones are quite often found in the red soil of Phœnicia, and travellers to that country bring them back as curios.

"The man who had been born blind saw the 'Adonis' stone, and plainly he was fascinated by its strange beauty. Presently he plucked up sufficient courage to try to secure this pretty object. But he still found it difficult to use his eyes to direct his hands; three or four times he missed the treasure either by overreaching or by under-reaching. At last, however, he grasped it and laughed aloud delightedly. And then, the next instant, the 'Adonis' stone fell forgotten at his feet. For now he was gazing up at Mount Moriah and at the mass of snow and gold which is the Temple glistening in the sunlight—a marvellous spectacle even to us who have viewed it so often; he bowed his head and stood motionless in sheerest ecstasy.

"Now he was climbing the long range of steps to his home, bursting in upon his parents, proclaiming the miracle which had happened to him. Neighbours gathered quickly. 'Is not this he that sat and begged?' asked one. 'This is he,' affirmed a second, but others were doubtful. 'He is like him,' was the most that they would concede. Whereupon the young man confounded them all by declaring: 'I am he.' And indeed there could be no further uncertainty; they all knew his voice, and the other marks of personality were unmistakable. There followed a

tumult of questions and ejaculations.

"As luck would have it, Joel chanced to come this way. When he learned what had happened and that the worker of the wonder was Jesus of Nazareth, he frowned and hurried off. I guessed what was in his mind and so I made my way also to the Temple. Come with me and you shall see for yourself. But be

careful how you conduct yourself."

I followed James into the Temple enclosure. Over in one of the colonnaded porches surrounding the Sanctuary was gathered a group of high ecclesiastics, all members of the Great Council. Both Nicodemus and my uncle Joseph were present, and I also recognized Hananiah and several of his intimate friends. But who was that small, spare man who moved so quickly and so stealthily? None other than Annas, at one time High Priest and the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the present holder of the office.

Presently a detachment of the Temple guard appeared, bringing with them the young beggar man and his parents, the latter evidently very ill at ease. The prisoners—for such they virtually were—advanced to the tribunal, and the examination, conducted by Hananiah, began. The youth, in answer to the questioning, told the simple story of his healing, and Hananiah was quick to pounce upon the admission that Jesus had made a paste of clay and had anointed the blind man's eyelids. Both acts constituted

a technical profanation of the Sabbath, and one of the judges was shocked into exclaiming: "This man is not of God, because he keepeth not the sabbath day." And a second was equally emphatic in declaring: "How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles?" However, my uncle Joseph protested against the assumption that Jesus could be a wilful contemner of holy things, and Nicodemus sided with him, albeit somewhat hesitatingly. There appeared to be a division of opinion; the argument grew in intensity.

Hananiah had the parents called, and he proceeded to interrogate them with severity. Had the young man really been born sightless? And how had the cure been accomplished? The man and woman, terrified at the danger in their position, admitted that the youth was indeed their son, but denied all knowledge of how his eyes had been opened. "He is of age," concluded the

father; "ask him: he shall speak for himself."

Hananiah motioned to the officer to bring the young man to the witness stand. "Give God the praise," put in Joel with unctuous fervour; "we know that this man (Jesus) is a sinner." But the youth answered steadily: "Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see."

Hananiah scowled, and the disputation became acrid and wordy. Again the man born blind was asked to relate what had happened, and he reminded his judges that the story had been told and retold; what more did they want? "Will ye also be his disciples?" he concluded sarcastically. "We are Moses' disciples," retorted Hananiah. "And we know not from whence he is."

"Yet he hath opened mine eyes," persisted the beggar man.

* * * "Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind. If this man (Jesus) were not of god, he could do nothing."

Annas rose from his seat, white and raging; he shook his staff at the youth and shouted: "Thou wast altogether born in sin,

and dost thou teach us?"

The secret poll of the court was quickly taken. Possibly Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathæa may have moved to acquit, but the assembly numbered a score or more and only ten affirmative votes were necessary for a legal conviction. A blast from the Horn of Judgment, and Annas again rose and voiced the decision; amidst absolute silence he pronounced the terrible words of the *cherem*, or greater excommunication. From henceforth the defiant young beggar man must be considered as one dead;

he was now un-Synagogued, cast out, cut off from the Congregation of Israel. He would not be admitted in future into any assembly for public prayer and worship, he could not study nor hold ordinary intercourse with his fellow-men; as though he were a leper, he must not approach within four cubits of any orthodox person; when he died, stones would be cast upon his coffin and he would be buried without religious ceremonies; yes, this ban meant the virtual end of all things for the wretched runagate; life for him was now finished. Yet while the parents of the outlaw cringed in their abasement and slunk away as hastily as possible, the young man himself still held his head high and walked with a firm step, his sentence of a living death forgotten in the joyful realization of his new-found estate: "Whereas I was blind, now I see,"

Another trumpet blast and the Council rose; presently the Court of the Gentiles was almost deserted. But almost immediately the Master appeared; he was followed by John, Peter, and Andrew. James Major hastened to join them and told of all that had happened. Jesus said no word, but intimated that James should show him the way to the young mendicant's house.

There stood the man who had been born blind; but quite The news of his condemnation had travelled fast, and none cared to be seen in his company; even the parents had sought shelter in their wretched hovel from the presence of their accursed son. Yes, quite alone he stood there.

The Master approached that proscribed figure. "Dost thou

believe on the Son of God?" he asked.

"Who is he, Lord," came the answer, "that I might believe in him?"

"Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee." "Lord, I believe," cried out the man who had been born

blind. Then, falling at the feet of Jesus, he worshipped him. The Master turned and beckoned us to follow. But I lingered

an instant to look back on the young beggar man still standing solitary in the crowded street. Cast out of the Congregation, a pariah among his kindred and former friends, a man under the ban and so dead among the living—surely the hand of misfortune had fallen heavily upon him. But there was another side to the picture; the burden of his lifelong infirmity had been lifted, and the whole glorious world of sun and stars, of trees and grass and springing flowers had suddenly been revealed to him. Yes, and more than that—so infinitely more than that—his newly opened eyes now looked upon Jesus.

That same night the Master decided to return immediately to

Galilee, and never again did I meet or hear anything about the man who had been born blind; his very name remains unknown. But I shall always remember him as one upon whom Jesus had bestowed a very special, a very wonderful, grace. At the self-same moment that the doors of Israel's sacred assembly were closed against him, the Master's own hands had opened the portals of the kingdom of heaven. And that light of the world, which had been hidden from the apperception of the mighty in their seats of pride and power, had been revealed to the eyes of a poor, blind beggar.

Truly he hath filled the hungry with good things, and the rich

he hath sent empty away!

John and I have had a discussion whose outcome seems indecisive. What was the exact wording of the inquiry which the Master addressed to the young man whose sight had been restored? As I recall it, Jesus said: "Dost thou believe on the Son of man?" And in this I was supported by Thomas and by James Major. But John demurred, affirming that the question ran: "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?"

"Perhaps he was speaking in the general sense," I offered.
"I mean that Jesus used the phrase, 'Son of God,' just as one

might say: 'I am a son of Adam.'"

"The man who had been born blind did not think so," retorted John. "For he knelt and worshipped Jesus."

XX

"LAZARUS, COME FORTH"

OR ten weeks now I have been an invalid in consequence of a fall sustained at our first stop in Peræa, the ancient town of Beth-Haran lately rebuilt by Herod the Great and renamed Livias. An insecure parapet on the housetop of the inn where we lodged had given way, precipitating me into the courtyard, and resulting in a fracture of the right leg. It was a serious injury, since the broken bone had pierced the flesh, making an ugly-looking wound. The Master, with most of the disciples, had already taken his departure, and only Jude and James Minor were with me when the accident happened. "I will run after Jesus," said James anxiously, "and bring him back to heal you." But to this I would not agree. The Master had his mission to perform in trans-Jordania, and I would not be the cause of its interruption. James Minor protested; but I stood firm, and in the end my two friends reluctantly left me in the care of an excellent leech from the neighbouring village of Beth-Abara, and went on to rejoin the Master; at my explicit request, they were not to acquaint Jesus with the precise nature of my injury. And so I remained alone in the comfortless hostelry for the tedious period of convalescence.

An heroic gesture? Well, since this is a story told without reserves, I may acknowledge that I had small faith in the Master's power to overcome such unpromising conditions. I had been an eye-witness of many apparent marvels performed by Jesus—lepers cleansed, paralytics made to walk, devils cast out, dead men restored to life—a long list of wonderful works. But always the same doubt had obtruded itself: I felt there must be some ra-

tional explanation of these miracles.

A sceptical attitude perhaps, but that was the inevitable result of my inherited temperament and philosophical education. Really, at the very back of my consciousness, lay the dread that Jesus might fail to cure my broken leg, and any such defeat would be disastrous to his hitherto triumphant career. Now I did not wish him to fail; it would be intolerable to feel that I had been the stumbling-block in his spiritual work. Yes, I would not take the risk; better, far better, that I should suffer this temporary incon-

venience rather than be the cause of communicating my own misgivings to the mind of others. And so I set Jude and James on their way, and resigned myself to the long interval of pain and

inactivity.

The knitting of the broken bone had been accomplished in normal fashion, but the further complication of a low form of desert fever kept me bedridden for several additional weeks. I had no books or manuscripts with which to divert my mind, and the only tangible usufruct of my enforced captivity was the acquisition of a full beard. A trivial matter it may seem—hardly worth mentioning. But there was something behind the outward sign. Up to this time I had been the only member of the Apostolic circle who did not respect the ancient Levitical injunction against shaving or marring the corners of one's beard. Following the custom of my Gentile friends, I kept myself cleanshaven, and even felt a certain pride in my emancipation from the traditional hirsute standards of my race. But my long and intimate association with the Master now caused me to revise my attitude in this matter. Was I ready to continue in the company of Jesus to the end, whatever that end might be? If so, it were better to abjure artificial distinctions of every sort; I must be one with my brethren in outward guise as well as in inward spirit. And therefore I allowed my beard to grow.

It was the second day after leaving my bed and my strength had so far returned that, shortly after midday, I was able to hobble into the courtyard and sit there basking in the late winter sun, my snug corner being fairly protected from the searching

wind.

Two hours later I had a welcome visitor, Philip. He told me that the Master had completed an extended journey through Peræa and was now on his way back to Beth-Haran; he would arrive with his disciples at the time of the evening meal, and he had accorded Philip permission to hasten on ahead and acquaint

me with the good news of the coming reunion.

Eagerly I questioned my cousin as to all that had happened in these ten weeks, and he had much to tell me. It seems that the teaching and preaching mission of the Seventy had been concluded; the disciples had returned with joy, proclaiming that even the devils had been subject unto them through the power of the Master's Name. "But," continued Philip, "Jesus only answered: 'Rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.' And then the Master turned to us and said privately: 'Blessed are the eyes which see the things which ye see: for I tell you, that

many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.' "

"It is true," I assented. "To be with Jesus is to learn of

him."

"And at another time," went on Philip, "there was the question with which a certain lawyer tempted him, saying: 'Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?' Whereupon Jesus asked: 'What is written in the law? how readest thou?' which the lawyer answered: 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself.' 'Thou hast answered right,' agreed Jesus. 'This do, and thou shalt live.' But the lawyer was persistent. 'And who is my neighbour?' he asked. Whereupon the Master told the story of the Good Samaritan—the man who journeying from Jerusalem to Jericho fell among thieves, was robbed and left half dead; and who was rescued by a despised Samaritan, after priest and Levite had looked at him and passed by on the other side. 'Which now of these three * * * was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves?' inquired Jesus. There could be only the one answer: 'He that shewed mercy on him.' Again the Master smiled. 'Go, and do thou likewise,' he admonished him."

"This is far from the teachings of the scribes and Pharisees,"

I commented.

Philip nodded. "It is another thing entirely," he agreed. "Our Law is strict in demanding satisfaction for sin, a full payment for the debt incurred. But Jesus goes further in insisting upon a true repentance; moreover, a man may be legally guiltless of wrongdoing as defined by Moses, and yet remain a sinner in God's sight. There were the Galilæans 'whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices.' But Jesus, in replying to the question concerning their transgression, said: 'Suppose ye that these * * * Galilæans were sinners because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay: but except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish. Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower of Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay: but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.'"

"Then the issue is finally joined between Jesus and his foes,"

I said, breaking a long silence.

"It looks like it. Especially since the clash which happened just the other day."

"Tell me."

"The Master went up to Jerusalem . . ."

"What, again?"

"It was the Feast of the Dedication of the Temple—the twenty-fifth of *Chisleu*. Jesus decided to attend it. Peter, John, James Major, and I were also present. One cold day, when alternating sleet and snow squalls made existence hardly endurable,

the Master took refuge in Solomon's Porch.

"A crowd quickly collected, and one man—it was that insistent Joel again—shouted out: 'If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly.' Jesus answered: 'I told you, and ye believed not: the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me.' Whereupon, the hot-headed ones again took up stones, and made as though they would inflict the supreme penalty. Jesus retorted: 'Many good works have I shewed you from my Father; for which of those works do ye stone me?' Hananiah and Joel replied with one voice: 'For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God.'"

I drew a long breath. "And then?" I asked.

"Jesus answered: 'Say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemeth; because I said, I am the Son of God? If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works: that ye may know and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in him.'"

"That would hardly appease them, Philip."

"Nor did it. The muttered disapproval swelled into a roar of denunciation; like a swarm of infuriated bees they buzzed around

us; presently we should feel their stings.

"But at that critical moment Simon Zelotes appeared from nowhere, placing himself before the Master, and drawing his dagger. So ferocious was his demeanour that, for an instant, the oncoming rush was checked. Profiting by the diversion, the rest of us hurried Jesus to the Shushan or Golden Gate, at the northeast corner of the Temple enclosure. Once outside, it was a simple matter to make our way out of the city.

"Of course, there was but one thing to do," concluded Philip. "That same day we returned to the regions beyond Jordan into the place where John the Baptist first delivered his message. And once more the common folk flocked about Jesus; yes, and many believed on him. It was like the old days in Galilee."

The short winter day was drawing to its close as we sat and talked, and a steadily clouding sky obscured the sun; I shivered

as the evening chill penetrated my enfeebled body. Presently the sound of familiar voices met my ear, and the next moment my dear companions of the Apostolic band had entered the courtyard. But where?—and then I saw Jesus, and it were as though the sun had suddenly returned in all of its light and warmth and beauty. He had come, the Master for whom my soul had been longing, inexpressibly longing; and I rejoiced in the lovely words of the Song of Songs: "The voice of my beloved! behold he cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills. * * * For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land; the fig tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grapes give a good smell. * * * I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste. He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love."

I tried to rise as the Master approached, but my knees were trembling and I was powerless. And then Jesus came to me. Swiftly advancing, he placed his hands under my elbows and drew me to my feet. Whereupon, standing there in the circle of the Master's arms, I felt the tingling rush of returning health and well-being; for the first time in all those dreary weeks I was free from pain, with my strength renewed like the eagle's; from henceforth I shall run and not be weary, I shall walk and not

faint.

We looked at one another. There was a dancing light of amusement in Jesus' eyes as he noted the change in my countenance through the growth of my beard. But the Master offered no comment.

Anxiously I scanned the face and person of Jesus. He appeared to me as thinner than of wont, the natural result of his arduous labours in the extended journey through Peræa. But his step was firm, and upon his cheeks glowed the flush of physical haleness. Even more apparent were the evidence of supersensible vigour—the brightness of his eyes and the smiling curve of his lips. Indeed I may set down here my conviction that Jesus of Nazareth was the only wholly happy man who ever walked this earth. He might—and did—encounter privation and toil, disappointment and danger; but none of these things could dim the radiance of his commanding gaze or quench the ebullience of his lofty spirit. Yes, a happy man, and by some strange alchemy he seemed able to communicate a measure of his own unshakable content to all with whom he came into contact. Moreover, in the presence of the Master, each one of our

company of the Twelve lost something of his individual peccancy; subdued was the boastfulness of Simon Peter, softened was the truculence of James and John; yes, and the dourness of Simon Zelotes, the timidity of James Minor, the black dejection of Thomas, the thoughtless irresponsibility of Philip, my own cynicism, even the moody arrogance of Judas Iscariot—all these unlovely traits of character disappeared, at least for the time being, when we walked with Jesus; they were but as mists scattered by the rising sun of his perfect righteousness.

Late that evening as we sat at meat, it was announced that a servant from the household at Bethany had arrived and desired to speak with the Master. The young man, Ezra by name, bore a message from Mary and Martha concerning their brother Lazarus. "Lord," exclaimed Ezra excitedly, "behold, he whom thou lovest, is sick."

"This sickness," rejoined Jesus, "is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby." More the Master would not say, and the servant, unable to obtain any definite answer to his message, was finally

obliged to take his leave.

I assumed that we should start for Bethany with the first morning light. But the whole day passed and we were still at Beth-Haran. It was the same on the morrow, and it was not until the dawning of the fourth day that Jesus said to us quietly: "Let us go into Judæa again." Simon Peter voiced the general protest. "Master," he urged, "the Jesus of late sought to stone thee; and goest thou thither again?" Jesus answered: "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep." We looked at one another. "Lord," ventured Philip, "if he sleep, he shall do well." The Master shook his head. "Lazarus," he continued plainly, "is dead. And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe; nevertheless, let us go unto him."

There was an uncomfortable silence. And then Thomas—Thomas of all men! Thomas, the hesitant and doubtful!—gave the deciding word. "Let us also go," he exclaimed, "that we

may die with him."

Indeed it did seem imprudent that the Master should tempt fortune by voluntarily setting foot again upon Judæan territory. Twice now he had barely escaped the malice of his enemies; was it wise to risk a third imperilment? On the other hand, it should be remembered that Bethany was fully fifteen furlongs distant from Jerusalem, and probably the priestly party would not make

any overt move so long as Jesus did not enter the Holy City, and more especially the Temple precincts. And so, without fur-

ther parley, we set out.

During the past three days the winter had suddenly and finally broken. But it was a journey of some five-and-thirty miles from Beth-Haran and the Jordan had to be forded; consequently it was close to the first evening hour when we arrived at the outskirts of the village of Bethany.

As we walked along, I fell to speculating upon the outcome of our mission. Assuredly the illness of Lazarus must have been of a serious nature or the sisters would not have sought the Master's aid. Had his disease terminated fatally? Now Jesus had intimated that result, and had indeed plainly declared it. But

how could he know?

Hardly had we come within sight of the home of the Master's friends than we learned that Lazarus was actually dead, and that this was the fourth day since his body had been placed in the family sepulchre. The arrival of the Master must have been expected, for presently a door in the wall surrounding the estate opened and a woman came with rapid step to meet us. It was Martha, and the marks of grief were visible in her face and bearing. "Lord," she exclaimed, "if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. But I know that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee."

Jesus looked at her compassionately. "Thy brother shall rise

again," he said.

Martha's countenance did not change. "I know," she assented, "that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day." But there was no conviction in her tone of any present

help in this time of trouble.

For a brief moment Jesus was silent. Then again he spoke, and there was a rolling majesty in the cadences of his voice which I had never heard before; to this very day I can hear the echo of those wonderful words, destined through unnumbered ages to be the hope and consolation of every stricken but believing heart. For this is what he said:

"I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and

believeth in me shall never die."

Not a leaf rustled, not a stick crackled under foot, no bird sang, and no man spoke; Nature and humanity alike stood motionless and mute in the face of that tremendous affirmation.

"Believest thou this?" continued the Master.

And Martha—no longer the imperious, self-confident Martha

of old, but a mere weak woman broken on the wheel of suffering —answered in a voice barely exceeding a whisper: "Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world." Immediately she turned and ran back to where Mary sat "still in the house," surrounded by the many friends who had come to share in her sorrow. "The Master is come," Martha murmured in secret to her sister, "and calleth for thee." Mary rose quickly and came to Jesus; she fell at the Master's feet, and addressed him in Martha's selfsame words; "Lord," she said, "if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." Again she sobbed aloud, and the tears of the friends who had followed were mingled with her own. Whereupon, as John relates, the Master himself "groaned in the spirit and was troubled." There was silence.

None but the Master could have broken that silence, and presently he spoke. "Where have ye laid him?" he asked. Mary tried to answer, but could not; someone among the sympathizing friends made the reply: "Lord, come and see." With the Master walking at Mary's side, the company of mourners retook the

way to the house; and we, the disciples, followed.

The home at Bethany was of superior size to its neighbours and of considerable architectural importance; it did not front on the village street, but stood in its own grounds, a garden enclosed by a high wall of brick. The little estate was bounded at its far end by a natural barrier of limestone rock, and in the face of the cliff the family tomb had been hewn out; the vault being some six cubits in length by four in breadth and four in height; it was partially sunken below the ground level, and it opened upon a court, some six paces square, which was reached by a flight of three or four steps.

Slowly the little procession moved to the grave. Martha, coming out of the house, joined her sister and the Master; together they advanced to the court of the tomb and there stopped.

It was a lovely day in the first flush of the spring-tide. Already the violets and anemones were blooming out of the sad-coloured turf, and the trees were reclothing themselves in their infant apparel, a tender, shimmering veil of yellowish-green, so wraithlike that it seemed as though a breath might destroy it utterly. Swifts and martins were winging their way about the garden, intent upon the capture of any emerald-and-gold dragon-fly that might have the temerity to venture forth, and a rivulet cascaded from the cliff to fall like a string of tinkling bells into a fountain carved out of a solid block of Numidian marble. How blue the sky, how golden the sunlight! Welcoming the return of

springtime, life and beauty and all Nature seemed to smile. But

Jesus wept.

"Jesus wept!" How to reconcile this gesture of grief with my declaration, made only a moment ago, that the Master was the only truly happy human being who ever lived? Ah, but these tears were not for his own sorrow, the sterile manifestation of a self-pity that begins and ends in a closed circle. Moreover, in the groaning of his troubled spirit there was the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy concerning Yahveh's Suffering Servant: "A man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. * * But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed."

"Jesus wept!" A mystery that perhaps embodies a new conception of the conditions under which Jesus performed his mighty works—not the mere utterance of some magical words of power, but involving, in some fashion, the giving of himself, the sharing of his own glorious and perfect essence with suffering and imperfect humanity. A mystery indeed, whose full meaning was to be revealed only in the time to come, whose full

glory waits upon eternity.

The entrance to the tomb was closed by a massive slab. "Take ye away the stone," commanded Jesus. Instinctively, Martha started to protest. According to our Jewish tradition, putrefaction of a human body commences on the fourth day after dissolution, when the drop of gall falling from the sword-point of the Death-angel produces its ultimate effect, the soul taking its eternal flight as the fashion of the countenance changes. How could Martha bear to have exposed to sight the dishonour of that dear corse! "Lord," she exclaimed, "by this time * * * he hath been dead four days."

"Said I not unto thee," answered the Master, "that, if thou

wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?"

Martha shrank back. The stone was rolled away. From where we stood the rays of the descending sun fell straight upon the uncovered entrance, lighting up the full extent of the sepulchre. On either side were niches cut in the rock, several of them being filled with grey and shapeless bundles, sole remnants of our poor mortality. At the far end was a stone table and upon it lay a shrouded figure—" our friend Lazarus."

The Master lifted up his eyes. "Father," he prayed, "I thank

The Master lifted up his eyes. "Father," he prayed, "I thank thee that thou hast heard me. And I know that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it,

that they may believe that thou hast sent me."

And then a loud voice. "Lazarus," cried Jesus, "come forth."

An eternity—the space of perhaps two deep breathings—dragged itself away. And then, with a pricking at my hair roots, I saw that there was a stirring in that chamber of death. The thing that had been Lazarus was turning upon its side; now it was leaving its rocky bed precisely as a man who, awaking from a night's sleep, arises from his couch.

The figure, its arms and nether limbs still hampered by the tightly drawn cerements, managed to shuffle through the door-

way and into the forecourt; there it stood in the full light of day, its waxen eyelids blinking against the sun. The napkin which bound its jaws had slipped down, but from the convulsed throat and lips proceeded only an unintelligible rattle of sound.

And then—the unpredictable climax of this terrific scene—the shrouded shape swung clean around, turning its back upon the sweetness and light of the springtime; a poor, stumbling shade, affrighted by the fragrance and beauty of the world of living men, seeking again its only refuge from the fret and fever of mortal existence; a shrinking wraith groping its way towards the doorway of the sepulchre as though intent upon lying down once more on that couch of forgetfulness, that sleep of death for which the very aged long as inexpressibly as do the very young for the temporary surcease of natural slumber. But the passageway to the burial vault was barred, for Jesus stood there; yes, that selfsame Jesus who only a moment ago had proclaimed to a listening world: "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die."

The Master laid his hands upon those shaking shoulders, gently forcing them back and around; once again Lazarus gazed upon the sun, and the springing flowers and the greening grass. But this time there was something more; now he was looking into the face of Jesus. And as he looked the bewilderment of pain in his eyes passed away; Lazarus smiled back at the Master.

"Loose him," commanded Jesus, "and let him go."

A sigh and Martha—the once strong-willed, self-sufficient Martha—sank to the ground. But Mary, with the courage that only love can inspire, glided to her brother's side, her hands plucking uncertainly at the confining grave-bands. No one else stirred, and there was a hush of singing birds and even of falling water. John's fingers dug painfully into the flesh of my arm. Then, from behind, I seemed to catch the rustle of robes and the clack-clack of rapidly retreating sandals.

The Master stooped and touched Martha on the shoulder. Instantly she arose and joined her sister in steadying Lazarus up the steps and along the garden path to the house; they entered and Jesus, the lord of the life more abundant, followed after them.

I looked at John and John looked at me. Except for our two selves, the garden, so lately filled by a throng of eagerly expectant onlookers, was empty. From the distant street came the laughter of a child at play.

That same night we lodged at the little Judæan village of Ephraim, situated some twelve miles due north of Jerusalem. Long after the Master and our fellow-disciples had retired to rest, John and I crouched over a brasier, reviewing the happenings of this memorable day. "Surely now they will believe," asserted John.

I made no reply.

"You saw it with your own eyes, Bar-Talmai."

"Yes, I saw Lazarus coming out of the tomb at the call of the Master."

" Well?

"The raising of Lazarus was a prodigy—an horrendous prodigy if you will—but honour appertaineth only to Yahveh; and the Lord our God is a jealous God." Whereupon John, in his turn, fell on silence.

Late on the following day Jonathan Bar-Jonas, one of the small band of disciples in Jerusalem, presented himself. It appeared that the story of the raising of Lazarus had been told everywhere. Many had believed, but others again were disturbed in mind, and the occurrence had been reported to the chief priests and Pharisees; thereupon a council had been called to consider the matter.

According to Jonathan, the contention had been advanced that there were dangerous possibilities in the situation, and Hananiah had summed up the case in a masterly fashion. "What do we?" he asked, "for this man doeth many miracles. If we let him alone, all men will believe in him: and the Romans shall come and take away our place and nation."

"It was the High Priest Caiaphas," continued Jonathan, "who delivered the cunning judgment. 'Ye know nothing at all,' he told the members of the council, 'nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and

that the whole nation perish not."

"The time-server!" ejaculated Simon Peter. "I can see him now, with his rapacious dark face, intent only on saving his own skin and the spoils of his rich office. But, of course, he carried the others with him."

"Yes," assented Jonathan. "Even now they are taking counsel together to put the Master to death."

Jesus had joined the circle as Jonathan was speaking these last words. But the Master did not intimate that he heard them. Nevertheless, Jesus showed no disposition to invite disaster, and on the following day he led us again upon the open road.

XXI

ZACCHÆUS RECEIVES A GUEST

HOSE last few days of his ministry among men, the scene being the coast of Judæa, but on the farther or eastern side, beyond Jordan! Days so crowded with both the works and the words of wonder! The Evangelists have recorded in full the *Logia*, or sayings of the Master, at this period, but I am constrained to set down here certain pronouncements of Jesus which especially appealed to me at the time and which

I am now transcribing from my tablets.

There was the occasion on which he healed a blind and dumb man; plainly the wretched creature was possessed of a devil. When the Master had cast out the unclean spirit, the man both spake and saw. All marvelled; but a Pharisee named Malachi, whom I knew to be a close friend of Hananiah, had a ready explanation of the miracle. "This fellow," he cried, "doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub, the prince of the devils." The people nodded assent; it did seem plausible. But Jesus was quick to refute the absurdity. "Every kingdom," he said, "divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand; and if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how then shall his kingdom stand?"

Malachi reddened and affected to turn away. But the Master would not let him off so easily. "If I by Beelzebub cast out devils," he continued, "by whom do your children cast them

out? "

Malachi stood first on one foot and then on the other. Was this insolent young Galilæan rabbi laughing at him? "But if I," Jesus persisted, "cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you."

For a moment Malachi tried to stand his ground, even to reply. But he could find no sufficient answer, and presently he

slunk away. And the people jeered at him as he went.

A scribe plucked up courage to say: "Master, we would see a sign from thee." How strange to ask this while the man who had been blind and dumb was still lifting up his voice to extol the Everlasting Mercy! A sign indeed! "An evil and adulterous generation," answered Jesus, "seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: for as Jonas was three days and nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three

days and nights in the heart of the earth."

"What can the Master mean by that?" complained Philip in my ear. "Why does Jesus utter so many hard sayings?" But I shook him off impatiently, for the Master was still speaking. "The men of Nineveh," he went on, "shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and behold, a greater than Jonas is here."

Now again he spoke:

"The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon,

and behold, a greater than Solomon is here."

How confounding this pronouncement! Did Jesus indeed mean that he is greater than the prophet Jonah, whose story, as related in the book which bears his name, is the first definite revelation to men of the compassionate heart of God? For does not Yahveh say to the angry Jonah: "Should I not spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle?"

"And also much cattle!" The mercy of God extending over all his works; without whose knowledge not even a sparrow falleth to the ground. A whole theology in four words: "And also much cattle!"

Several incidents of this last excursion upon the open road rise from the well of memory and insist on being recorded. There was the occasion upon which "they brought young children to him, that he should touch them: and his disciples rebuked those that brought them. But when Jesus saw it, he was most displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein. And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them."

A tender and beautiful presentment of the Master's manysided personality. But to me it was something more; instantly came the memory of that "hard saying" uttered amid the mulberry trees of Simon Peter's garden on the lake of Gennesaret. For Jesus had said to me: "Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein."

"As a little child!" But these innocent ones had exercised no powers of faith or reason; they had merely submitted themselves to him in a trustful obedience; whereupon Jesus had taken them up into his arms and blessed them—the sign of admittance into that kingdom. Was this then what he meant—the simple yielding of oneself to those all-embracing, all-sufficient arms? And again I wondered and was troubled. Could I yield as those little ones had done? do I want to surrender myself?

A young man came running to meet the Master in the way. He came running, so eager was he to greet the Great Teacher and to learn of him. A rich youth, socially well-placed, and instructed in the Law, "even a ruler," adds Luke who knew him intimately.

The young man knelt at Jesus' feet and cried out: "Good

Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"

"Thou knowest the commandments," answered Jesus. "Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother."

"All these I have kept from my youth up," replied the young

man confidently.

"One thing thou lackest," continued the Master. "Go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me."

The young man's countenance fell. A moment of indecision and then, as Matthew tells us, "he went away sorrowful for he

had great possessions."

A tragedy! For this rich young ruler had enjoyed the priceless privilege of meeting with the Master face to face, had heard with his own ears the answer to the age-old question: "What good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?" Moreover,

according to Mark, "Jesus beholding him loved him."

To what heights might not this poor-rich young man have attained had he been willing to meet the Master's condition. His perishable wealth exchanged for the heavenly treasure which moth and rust cannot corrupt nor thieves break through and steal; his temporal rulership replaced by inclusion in the Glorious Company of the Apostles; his name writ large upon the roll of saints in the kingdom of God. For Jesus loved him. But he went away into the limbo of forgotten men, his great possessions

soon to be scattered, his rulership bestowed upon another, his very name lost in the darkness of death. And he went away in sorrow, a sadness which must endure throughout all the eons to come. So near to the kingdom and yet never to enter there. The pity of it!

Once more we are in Jericho, Jericho the "Perfumed." An enchanting place, this green oasis with its groves of balsam and bamboo and pepper trees; a famous city in the annals of Jewry, the first outpost of the Promised Land to be taken by Joshua and the army of the Chosen People. For the Lord of Hosts was with Joshua, and it needed but a final blast from the sacred trumpets to bring toppling down those proud and massy battlements.

A great multitude had accompanied us into the town, and its streets were crowded with folk of many sorts and conditions. And there was one among them, a resident of Jericho, Zacchæus, who felt an especial interest in the advent of the wonder-worker. Now Zacchæus was a tax-gatherer by profession, just as Matthew had been. One day, he heard of a youthful rabbi from Nazareth who had acquired great renown, and who went about doing good, and that without expectation of material reward. What an extraordinary idea! Zacchæus had spent his life doing evil, and had been well paid for it; this guileless stranger employed his marvellous gifts of healing and of dominion over Nature without money and without price. It sounded so wholly incredible, so ridiculously unbusinesslike, that Zacchæus was filled with curiosity; he determined that he too must see Jesus. But there was one special difficulty to be met. The streets were packed solidly with the expectant crowd and Zacchæus happened to be little of stature; how could he manage to obtain even a glimpse of the wonder-worker? But somehow it must be managed, and here I transcribe the story as told by Luke in his Gospel.

"And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him: for he was to pass that way. And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zacchæus, make haste, and come down; for to-day I must abide at thy house. And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully. And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, That he was gone to be a guest with a man that is a sinner. And Zacchæus stood, and said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold. And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to

this house * * * for the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

Again a miracle, but this time of grace alone. Zacchæus, in his wretched, lonely, despairing heart, had been longing, perhaps unconsciously but none the less truly, for the presence of God. And the Master knew it even before his eye fell upon Zacchæus in his sycamore tree. One look, but it was enough to melt the icy armour in which the heart of Zacchæus was encased. Here in this world of enemies was one friend; here was somebody who wanted him, the Zacchæus who was a sinner. And so he came down and received Jesus joyfully; this day was salvation come to the house of Zacchæus.

I have been told that in the later years Zacchæus became a distinguished follower of the Way, and even bishop of a North African diocese. But there is another story about him which I like better.

Many years later (so the tale runs), a nameless traveller came to Jericho and lodged there for a few days. Within the walls he noticed an ancient fig tree. Or was it a sycamore? There was nothing particularly attractive about it—a scraggly, weatherworn, half-dead tree with no beauty that one should desire it. But every morning an old, old man, noticeably short of stature, came and watered the tree, and stirred up the ground about its roots with loving care. One day the stranger inquired what might be the reason for this solicitude. "Because," answered the aged man, and as he spoke his old eyes grew young again (a lovely touch this!), "because it was from the branches of this tree that I first looked upon my Lord."

We have departed from Jericho. A few furlongs beyond the city gate the highway divides, the northeastern fork being the trans-Jordanian route to Galilee while the southwestern road leads to the Holy City. At this juncture the Master stopped, and I could easily guess what was passing through his mind. If he digressed to the right he would be returning to Galilee and to his own city of Capernaum, there to find rest and refreshment—the tender arms of his mother, the company of those who were still faithful to his cause, the peace of a quiet and well-ordered life. Yes, and the road to the left could lead only to fresh conflict with his enemies—arrest, condemnation, the scourging and spitting, the shameful death upon the Cross; all this according to his own foretelling.

Which road would he choose? I watched him as he stood at the crossways, his eyes wandering over the fair expanse of the

ancient Land of Promise—bright fields of living green beyond Jordan's swelling flood. And then his gaze shifted in the direction of Jerusalem. A short distance away the cinnamon-brown of the plain of Jericho gradually yields to drifts of dun-coloured sand, oyster-grey gravel, mounds of whitish clay, and blistered limestone ridges which harbour hundreds of little stone-coloured lizards, the only visible sign of animated life. As for the vegetation, there is nothing save rough furze dusted with a leprous scurf and strange sandflowers, yellow and violet in hue. And, still farther on, there opens the seared and rocky gorge leading steeply upwards to the city of David. Truly a desolate country, the visible presentment of what the prophet Ezekiel calls the "land of the pricking brier and of the grieving thorn." Which road, my Master?

But could there be any doubt? With a firm forward stride Jesus led the way to the left. We followed in silence, our sandals clip-clopping upon the incredible number of limestone chips which littered the highway, our mouths already parched with the clouds of fine, whitish dust stirred up by our passage, our skin shrivelled with the burning heat reflected from the bare and sun-twisted rocks. And now we had entered the gorge itself with its serpentine bends and overhanging, reddish cliffs stained by yellow slime and encrusted with salt; the rock wall pitted with innumerable caverns wherein might lurk unimaginable monstrosities of savage beasts and yet more savage men. For this was the road whereon a certain man "fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead." But the Master walked steadily onward.

And so we went up to Jerusalem. And for the last time.

XXII

A ROYAL PROGRESS

HAT night we lodged at Bethany, a league this side of Jerusalem. Jesus, as was his custom, went to the house of Lazarus and his two sisters. Ordinarily the disciples would have gone onward to the city, but the Master signified his wish that we should find quarters in the village. Of course we obeyed; doubtless he had some purpose in mind of which we should learn later. It was now six days before the Passover, which this year fell on the fifteenth Nisan.

Philip has come to tell of a supper which a man called Simon desires to give in honour of the Master after sunset on the evening of the Sabbath. All of the disciples are invited. "There is something odd about the affair," adds Philip. "The feast is to be in Simon's own house, but Martha is in charge of the preparations and of the service; I wonder why."

"Who is this Simon?" I asked.

"I don't know him at all. But they say he is the richest citizen of Bethany; moreover, according to John, he is the father of Judas Iscariot."

"But, Philip, you told me once that while the family of Judas is of Judæan origin, Simon came to Nazareth many years ago and established an oil press. And that he died there."

"Probably I was mistaken about that last. Certainly, this particular Simon, for some unknown reason, disappeared from Nazareth, returning to Judæa and apparently prospering there. It must be the same man, since Judas does not deny the relationship. Nevertheless, something is wrong. Judas seems to be at odds with his father and at first refused to attend the supper. However, the Master has persuaded him to accept the invitation. Shall we walk over? The hour is at hand."

The house of Simon, a substantial stone edifice, stood in a garden adjoining the estate owned by Lazarus and his sisters. When we entered, the company were already assembled. Lazarus, grave and silent as usual, bade us welcome. Martha was busy with her accustomed duties as housewife. Mary I did not see.

All of the disciples were present, but Judas, with a black frown furrowing his forehead, stood apart and spoke to no one. Presently the Master entered, and we sat down to meat.

The apartment was a spacious one and high-ceilinged; the appointments were rich and every provision had been made for our comfort. But where was Simon our host? Not a sign of

his presence.

Opposite to where I sat, a curtained balcony projected from the wall; primarily intended for the accommodation of women. It was occupied, but by a man. Now the curtains were drawn aside, and, as he leaned forward, I saw his face plainly. Those significant nodules on the eyebrows, cheeks, and lobes of the ears! those patches of bleached and discoloured skin! Yes, it was all too evident; Simon, our host, was a leper, and, being under the ban of uncleanness, it was not lawful for him to mingle with his guests. Therefore he had asked Martha to act as hostess, and we should not meet Simon either at supper or afterwards. But he had done everything in his power to make the occasion a pleasant one, quite different from the earlier feast in the house of another Simon, surnamed the Pharisee, where Jesus, Philip, and I had been guests. Simon the leper had given all that he had to give, and Jesus was quick to recognize the loving heart; I happened to notice the glance that the Master flashed at that curtained balcony, and how the disfigured face of Simon the leper glowed as he met it. Also I recall that Jesus suddenly disappeared at the ending of the supper, and it is not too much to conclude that he may then have gone to Simon and bestowed upon him the healing touch of his blessed hands. For there were many mighty works of compassion performed by the Master concerning which no record was ever made. We know only that he healed them all.

Still another curious parallel between that feast at Caper-

naum and this supper at Bethany.

While the meal was in progress, a woman entered—Mary of Bethany. In her hand was a box containing the Indian ointment known as spikenard—very precious. "And she brake the box, and poured it upon his head * * * and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment."

A lovely act of homage. But the Iscariot uttered a discordant note. "Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor?" he snarled. "This he said," comments John, "not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein."

As I have previously set down, there was always an under-

current of hostility between John and Judas, and the "Son of Thunder" gives no evidence to support his accusation. Judas's outburst, in all probability, was merely temperamental. Here he was in his own father's house, and Simon was a leper; the affliction was a family disgrace and Judas felt it keenly; he was

ready to strike out at any thing or at any man.

As always, it was the Master who spake the word which calmed the tempest. "Let her alone," he said, "she hath wrought a good work upon me. For ye have the poor with you always; * * * but me ye have not always. * * * She hath done what she could; she is come aforehand to anoint my body to the burying. Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her."

Truly the Master spoke well. Mary's deed of love is not

forgotten; I, in my turn, have told of it.

On the day after the Sabbath, at sunrise, we left Bethany and took the highway to the city. The road was already crowded with pilgrims bound for the approaching Passover; all carried cypress boughs or palm branches, and as they journeyed they sang the ancient hymns of Israel: "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help." * * * "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord." * * * "When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream." * * * " Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain." * * * "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee. Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces." Mingling our voices with those of our fellow-countrymen, we trudged slowly onward, our sandals covered with the fine, white dust stirred up by thousands of plodding feet. But the sun shone golden under the blue arch of the sky, and the air, the first breath of the new-born spring, was soft and sweet.

Just outside the hamlet of Bethphage (the "House of Green Figs") Jesus halted and told Andrew and Philip to precede us to the village. There they would find an ass's colt tied, "whereon never man sat." They were to loose the animal and bring it to the Master. "And," he continued, "if any man say unto you, Why do ye this? say that the Lord hath need

of him."

Presently the two disciples reappeared, leading the foal. It was well grown for its age, and boasted a fine, grey coat that

was peculiarly marked—a black stripe running down the backbone with a subsidiary, horizontal line at the shoulder-blades, thus presenting a rough approximation to the Greek or *Tau* cross. Several of us offered our outer garments in lieu of a saddle, and the Master, having mounted the beast, commanded that the march should be resumed.

On the right, as we drew near to Jerusalem, rose the vineyarded terraces and fig orchards of the Mount of Olives, with the white walls of houses, the suburban residences of the wellto-do, gleaming through the grey-green foliage of the olive groves. On the left was the narrow valley of the brook Kidron, and over the waste spaces beyond hung the eternal smoke from Hinnom or Gehenna, site of the ancient heathen rites of Moloch and hence a place accursed forevermore. And now occurred

a peculiar incident.

Striding through the press came our old foe Joel. In his hand he carried an iron-shod staff and, as ill luck would have it, James Minor was unable to get out of the way. I may not have mentioned it before, but in all of our previous encounters Joel had displayed a particular malevolence towards James Minor; always he was taunting our lame brother with his infirmity, and he lost no opportunity for treating him rudely. Now Joel, annoyed by James's involuntary interruption of his progress, gave the culprit a violent push, at the same time bringing down his staff on that sensitive instep; with a moan, James sank to the ground. Filled with righteous fury, I sprang at Joel, but one of his friends thrust out a tripping foot and I went headlong.

The Master, dismounting, went to James; he raised the cripple to his feet, and walked with him for a short distance; presently James smiled and announced that the pain was gone,

that he was perfectly able to proceed.

The procession had halted at this the last turn of the winding road, and the whole panorama of the city of David, glorious in its beauty, lay before our enraptured gaze. But there were tears in the Master's eyes, and his lips quivered as he murmured: "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong to thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation."

Slowly the procession wound up the slight ascent to the Sheep Gate and entered. The streets were filled with pilgrims and citizens, the tide of national hopes and aspirations running strongly on this the greatest of the feasts of Jewry; the chorus of many voices rose and fell. Suddenly the significance of that white-clad figure riding on the foal of an ass seemed to dawn upon the throng. "Who is this?" shouted a stentorian voice. And immediately came the answering acclaim: "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest."

Had the incredible happened? Was Jesus really coming into his own? Alas! the discordant note was quick to follow. A harsh and sarcastic utterance broke upon our ears; Joel, stand-

ing in the forefront of the spectators, was speaking.

"Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Jerusalem," he mocked; "Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold thy King cometh unto thee: he is just and having salvation; lowly, and riding

upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass."

Undoubtedly Joel meant to discredit the advent of the Master, but one can never forecast the emotional reactions of a crowd. Instantly other voices took up the prophetic words of Zechariah: "Behold, thy King cometh unto thee," they chanted again and again. And then the people went wild. The pilgrims cast down their palm branches, while others in the company strawed their garments in the way over which the Master was to pass. A mighty acclamation arose: "Hosanna to the son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the Highest!"

A cold, cutting voice, that of Hananiah Ben-Hamel, appealed directly to the Master. "Rebuke thy disciples," it demanded. But Jesus answered: "I tell you, that if these should hold their

peace, the stones would immediately cry out."

Choking with fury, Joel flung himself at the Master, his fist clenched to strike. But the threatened blow never fell, for as Joel darted forward he seemed to collapse, pitching directly on his face.

For a moment or two, nobody moved or spoke. Then Hananiah, taking Joel by the shoulders, turned him over; the man's face, still crimsoned by the congested blood, stared sightlessly at

the brassy sky.

Hananiah shook his head. "Remove me this body," he said to one of his followers, and turned aside. Here was nothing but a broken tool fit only for the grave. But the eyes of Jesus were filled with tears as he watched Joel borne away—Joel who had been his enemy.

As we drew near to the Temple—always the first interest to the Master on his infrequent visits to Jerusalem—we passed through a certain street in which dwelt the wealthier of our citizens, together with many of their Roman overlords. A pretentious house boasted a balcony overhanging the thoroughfare, and on this point stood a little group of people. I recognized the regal form of Claudia, and next to her, Lilli. Back of Lilli lounged a youth, effeminate of countenance and with a mouth both weak and cruel. The young man wore a chaplet of vine leaves and he appeared to be slightly drunken; he kept leaning over Lilli's shoulder, seeking to attract her attention. But the girl shook her head impatiently; all her eyes were for the Master and for him alone.

"Felix Flaminius," whispered Philip in my ear. "He is a member of a great patrician house at Rome and Lucius Verus thinks that he is a chief suitor for the favour of Lilli. But I like him not."

My heart contracted as I listened. Yet what could it matter? We were now living in altogether different worlds. I kept my head down as we passed. Lilli may have seen and recognized me, but she gave no sign and an instant later we had turned the corner.

The shouting and the tumult were spent and, for the first time, we were comparatively alone. The Master, dismounting, sent the foal scampering away by a gentle slap upon its sleek flank.

I have often wondered if the young ass colt ever found its way back to the "House of Green Figs," there to nuzzle contentedly at its mother's dugs. I like to think that it did so return; also that it never became a common beast of burden, that no man thereafter bestrode its back marked with the sign of the Tau cross; that its owner, who had lent it so willingly to the service of the Master, kept it in honour and esteem for the remainder of its life. A mere fancy, of course, but is not this the same Lord who had compassion upon the dumb beasts of that great city of Nineveh? "And also much cattle."

Entering the Temple enclosure, the Master looked long upon the familiar and well-loved scene. As ever, a multitude of listeners gathered around him and he taught them as was his wont. And now, eventide being close at hand, Jesus signified that we should return to Bethany. But I, with the Master's assent, remained behind; I had determined upon spending the night with Verus. In a way, this would be merely the fulfillment of a long-deferred promise, but at the back of my mind I had some questions to ask of him; who was this Felix Flaminius, and was there any definite understanding between him and Lilli? You see that I fully admit my weakness. But I felt that I must know.

Verus received me with friendly arms, lodging me in his own apartments at the fortress and contriving a special supper of which the chief component was a wonderful dish of lampreys or stewed eels just delivered by private convoy from Brundisium. Afterwards we sat for a long time on the ramparts in the starlit dusk, the lights of the city twinkling far below. We talked freely and confidentially.

"This young rabbi of yours," began Lucius, "does he really

think of himself as Messias?"

"Frankly, I do not know."

"The populace gave him a royal welcome. It seemed sincere."

"But founded upon a total misconception, if I know anything of the Master's mind. He preaches only a kingdom of righteousness, but the Jews look for the overthrow of the Roman

power—a purely material view.

"Listen to this," I went on, "and you can form some idea of how grossly the scribes and teachers misinterpret the coming of the Anointed One. Here is a rabbinical gloss upon the prophecies dealing with the expected millennium. It is so extravagant that I took the trouble of learning it verbatim. Listen.

"'The days will come in which vines shall grow, each with ten thousand branches, and in each branch ten thousand twigs, and on each twig ten thousand shoots, and in each shoot ten thousand clusters, and in each cluster ten thousand grapes; and each grape when pressed will give five-and-twenty casks of wine. The vines will bear grapes all the year round, and the figs will never stop growing.' 'One grape,' says Rabbi Eleazar, 'will be a load for a waggon, and we shall be able to draw wine from it as though it were a cask. A single grain of wheat will be as large as the kidney of an ox.'"

"Surely your friend Jesus does not hold with such nonsense,"

commented Verus.

"Surely not. But the crowd-mind is not to be reasoned with. What will happen when it becomes apparent that no such prodigies are to be expected?"

"They will turn upon Jesus just as vehemently as they now

acclaim him."

"Precisely. And therein lies the danger to the Master. All this uproar simply plays into the hands of his enemies."

"Perhaps he is self-deceived."

"I cannot think so. Nor would you if you knew him."

"We can only wait for whatever lies upon the knees of the gods," concluded my friend. "By the way, have you seen your cousin Lilli since she acquired Roman status?"

"Not to speak with her. I saw her to-day in company with Claudia Procula and a young spark—Felix Flaminius by name.

Do you know him?"

Lucius Verus had no good word to say for the Roman exquisite. His family, so he informed me, was rich and powerful, being related by marriage to the Emperor. But Felix was a mere idler, and steeped to the core in the rottenness of the imperial court.

"And Lilli herself—is it possible or even probable?"

"It would be a brilliant alliance for her, no doubt. Also sure to end in unhappiness. You would not like that."

"No," I assented miserably. "However, there is nothing to be done about it. I have no right to interfere—not the smallest."

Verus pressed my hand in sympathetic silence and the subject dropped. But it was hours before I slept; and then badly.

XXIII

THE SHADOWS GATHER

HAVE requested Philemon to read over to me this last section of my dictated manuscript. It is curious how inevitably I am coming to think and speak of Jesus as something more than man, foreshadowing my final conviction of his nature and mission; imperceptibly I am yielding myself to him as being in very truth the Word made flesh. But I make no apologies and I shall not bother about alleged ambiguities and inconsistencies. For the time is close at hand when my slowly-budding faith is to be withered by a whirlwind blast, the rising dawn of a new day eclipsed by the shadow of a seemingly impenetrable night.

I had intended to rejoin the other disciples at an early hour on the succeeding day, but it was not to be. When I awoke my temples were throbbing as though hammers were beating on my skull, my eyes were clouded, and a cold sweat covered my body;

I found myself too weak to move hand or foot.

Indeed I should have known better than to be seduced by the pleasures of my friend's table. Since I have been with the Master, my daily diet has been of the simplest—unleavened cakes of barley meal, a cluster of raisins, a portion of lentils and leeks, fresh fruit in season. And yet Verus had offered no unduly extravagant feast. There had been a cut of cold meat, a cucumber salad, and wheaten bread—hardly a banquet worthy of Lucullus. True, I had eaten heartily of an exquisite honeycomb dripping with sweetness, and there had been several draughts of spiced Falernian wine. Probably the real offender had been that dish of stewed lampreys, for the rich, oily mess would have taxed the powers of even a legionary's stomach. reflected miserably that I had been properly punished for my infraction of the Levitical code; fish such as eels, which possess neither fins nor scales, being strictly prohibited. headed Sadducee, I was no formalist in such matters, and my western sophistication had made me indifferent to our ancient dietetic regulations. But as a sensible man, I should have known better.

When Verus finally entered my sleeping apartment, I had to endure his gibes and mock protestations of sympathy. "But I must get word to Philip that I shall be unable to be at the Temple to-day," I interrupted. "This illness with me is invariably a four-and-twenty-hour affair."

"Nothing easier." Lucius clapped his hands and ordered a slave to command the attendance of a certain Longinus. "One

of my centurions," he explained.

Presently Longinus appeared. A burly fellow with a cold

blue eve and features as immovable as a granite cliff.

"My friend here wants to send a message to a man named Philip," said Verus. "He can be found in the Temple area in company with that young Nazarene rabbi; I mean the wonderworker who called forth Lazarus of Bethany from the tomb. You have heard of Jesus?"

Longinus nodded. "Yes," he answered.

"Your messenger can easily pick out Philip of Bethsaida," I put in. "He is taller by half a head than anyone else in the company, and his beard, yellow as a field of ripened grain, falls

to his waist; you cannot mistake him."

"No," agreed Longinus as succinctly as before. And—parenthetically—I may here record the fact that I never heard from Longinus a single word other than the monosyllabic "yes" or "no," except on one memorable occasion when we stood together on a certain green hill outside the city wall.

Lucius brought in his writing tablet—a thin wooden plate covered on one side by a deposit of wax. I took the iron stylus and indited a brief message. Lucius enclosed the tablet in a box for the protection of the writing and rolled a square of linen about it. "See that this is delivered at once," he ordered.

"Yes," assented Longinus. He gave the military salute, turned on his heel, and strode away. A man of deeds then if

not of words.

All day long I lay on my couch, prostrate in both mind and body. The very thought of food was revolting, but as the hours dragged on the pains in my head began to lessen. And then, with the coming of the "first evening," I had a visitor, Philip.

"I am ashamed of myself," I began contritely.

Philip smiled. "Poor human nature!" he observed sententiously.

"And the Master?"

"He seemed amused when I told him. But I am sure that he understands. And even sympathizes, little as you deserve it."

"What has happened to-day?"

"You remember the cleansing of the Temple two years ago. Well, of course, Jesus had hardly turned his back when the abominable traffic again started up; the High Priest and his parasites are too intent upon their fat profits to forego such easy money. How I hate that Caiaphas!" he added vehemently. "What did Jesus do?"

Philip laughed. "As before, he commanded that the sacrilege should cease. At once the multitude of hucksters and money-changers melted away; none could withstand the lightning in his eyes. But the priests and scribes were furious. 'By what authority doest thou these things?' they asked. And again: 'Who gave thee this authority?'"

"And Tesus?"

"He answered them: 'The baptism of John, was it from heaven or of men?' Of course, they were sharp enough to perceive the two horns of the dilemma. If John's work were really of God, why then did they not believe what he told them? If the Baptist should be discredited as a mere wild man from the desert raving incomprehensible things, the people, who still hold that John was a great prophet, would be offended and seriously so. Finally our old enemy Hananiah blurted out: 'We cannot tell.' Whereupon the Master retorted: 'Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things.' That ended the controversy and for the remainder of the day Jesus taught the people. Moreover, great numbers of the blind and lame sought his aid. And he healed them all, just as he used to do in Galilee."

I kept silence, but Philip went on volubly, with almost a touch of boastfulness in his tone. "Jesus is far too clever for them," he proclaimed. "Never can they trap him. And more and more the people are coming to believe in him; what a triumph was that of yesterday when he rode into the city! Again, everyone who hears of the raising of Lazarus stands ready to hail the Master as the very greatest of the prophets. I tell you, Nathanael, that soon he will confound his enemies alto-

gether; have no fear of that."

Once more I had no word to say, and Philip, after expressing

a kindly hope for my recovery, departed for Bethany.

Long I brooded over what Philip had told me. But I wondered if he were entirely justified in his optimism. No one can question Philip's honesty and devotion to the Master, but I am by no means certain of either his perspicacity or his judgment. Here is this second purging of the Temple, new fuel for the fires of envy on the part of the Master's opponents. Of Caiaphas, the High Priest, I take small account. He is a stupid and

a greedy man, intent only on remaining in the good graces of his Roman overlords. Why even the gorgeous hierarchal vestments which Caiaphas will flaunt so proudly on the day of the Paschal feast are ordinarily kept under lock and key at the Prætorium and are only delivered to him for the actual ceremonies of the Passover week; immediately upon their conclusion Caiaphas must return them to their custodians. He may both fear and hate Jesus, but he will be wary of openly antagonizing the people, or indeed doing anything which might lead to a general uprising and thus bring him into disrepute with the secular authority.

But Annas—ah, that is very different. He knows how to translate his feelings into action at once malevolent and aggressive. He will remain in the background; then if Caiaphas but raises his hand, we may be sure that somewhere in the shadows Annas is pulling the string which controls his puppet.

And so I continue to be anxious for what to-morrow—any morrow—may bring forth.

I passed a better night, but found myself too weak to keep my legs with any degree of certainty. At midday I took a bowl of barley gruel, and an hour later I was able to make my way, slowly and painfully, in the direction of the Temple. In one of the narrow streets I fell in with the centurion Longinus and a file of his legionaries; they had with them a prisoner heavily ironed, a broad-shouldered, shaggy-haired ruffian who looked like a trapped wolf. "Who is it?" I asked of a bystander.

"A stirrer-up of strife and a murderer. In his lighter moments, a common robber." He spat vehemently on the ground. "Only a month ago he despoiled me, on the road between Jerusalem and Jericho, of a camel's load of the richest and rarest silks. But the Romans have him at last. They will crucify him, and then he will burn in hell forever."

"What is his name?"

"Bar-Abbas."

I had never heard the name before. But shortly in the future I was to hear it again, and then I was never to forget it.

As I entered the Court of the Women, Philip spied me and

hastened to my side.

"Where is Jesus?" I asked, and Philip pointed across the Court of the Women. Wearied by the contentious wrangling, the Master had left the Porches and had ascended the steps leading up from the Terrace to the Gate Beautiful; there he had

seated himself. The time of Sacrifice had passed, but the court was still crowded with people who had remained for private devotions or to pay their vows and offerings, the latter being deposited in the thirteen trumpet-shaped boxes which stood under the colonnades on the northern and southern sides of the court. Just then the Master looked up, recognized me, and beckoned to a seat at his side; greatly to my relief, he said no word. Around the treasury-boxes passed a continuous line of

donors and the Master watched them interestedly.

Hesitatingly a solitary figure mingled with the throng, her principal garment, coarsely woven from goat's hair, proclaiming that she was in mourning. I recognized her as Joanna. Chuzas, her husband, had died recently in a drunken fit; Joanna therefore was now a nominal widow, and her poverty was plainly indicated by the character of her clothing—poor material and of unfashionable cut. With something tightly clutched in her right hand she edged her way to one of the "trumpets." Then, as she raised her hand to make the offering, she was jostled from behind and the money, rattling against the lip of the box, fell to the ground. The coins rolled almost to where we were sitting and I saw them plainly—two mites (perutahs) of Maccabæan money and hence a lawful offering. But also the very smallest gift that could be received, almost nothing in terms of actual value. The bystanders stared and several of the more vulgar-minded laughed aloud. The woman, her cheeks crimsoned, retrieved the pitiful offering and the coins fell tinkling into the treasury-box; then she hastened away. The Master's eye followed the retreating form; he spoke: "Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in than all they which have cast into the treasury: for all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living."

How unerringly Jesus pierces to the heart of every deed. Two mites! But here was no tax grudgingly paid, no ostentatious display of liberality through which the giver might acquire merit in the eyes of those who stood by, no vain attempt to purchase with money the forgiveness of trespasses. "All that she had, even all her living." A pure offering then, ascending as incense

into the very presence of the Most High.

Silently Jesus was disappearing into the deepening shadows of the colonnades. Obeying his signal, we followed as discreetly as possible. Passing through the Court of the Gentiles, we gained the shelter of Solomon's Porch and finally emerged

through the Golden or Shushan Gate; for the last time, Jesus had left the sacred enclosure of the Temple—his Father's house. And no man had ventured to challenge or to lay hands upon him.

Under the sheer precipice of the hill Ophel we stopped with one accord to look back on the enormous bulk of the Temple looming dark against an angry and crimsoned sky. Never had the glory of Israel seemed so impressively majestic, and even the ordinarily taciturn Thomas was shaken out of his accustomed quietism. "Master," he exclaimed, "see what manner of stones and what buildings are here!" And indeed Thomas spake truly, for some of the courses were composed of blocks of stone that would measure in length ten times the height of a man; they presented an appearance as enduring as that of time itself. But Jesus shook his head. "Behold," he said, "the days will come in which there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down."

What an incredible prophecy! And yet I, Nathanael Bar-Talmai, have myself lived to see that prophecy fulfilled to the very letter. The last time I visited the valley of the Kidron I found that its original bed had been raised, by the accumulation of rubbish and masses of ruined masonry, to nigh the height of the tallest of Lebanon's cedars. "Not one stone left upon another."

Now we had reached our familiar resting ground on a lower slope of the Mount of Olives, and it was time to make preparation for our simple evening meal. But the weight of the Master's incredible pronouncement still lay heavily upon our spirits, and no one addressed himself to the homely task. "Master," suddenly burst out James Major, "tell us, when shall these things be?"

Gathered in a semicircle, we attended silently as the Master uttered the fateful apocalypse recorded in the Evangels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. He told us of false Christs that should appear to deceive many; of wars and rumours of wars; of nation rising against nation; of famines and pestilences and earthquakes; of fearful sights and signs from heaven. "All these," warned the Master, "are the beginning of sorrows."

Only the beginning! What more of labours and suffering can there be for mortal man to endure! But Jesus went on relentlessly; he foretold that, as his disciples, we must expect to be hated of all men for his sake; that the brother shall betray the brother to death; children plotting against their parents, and fa-

thers at deadly enmity with their sons; the full abomination of desolation predicted by the prophet Daniel. "Then," continued Jesus, "let them which be in Judæa flee into the mountains: let him which is on the housetop not come down to take anything out of his house; neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes. And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days. But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day: for there shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. * * * And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars, * * * the seas and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear; * * * for the powers of heaven shall be shaken."

Awestruck, we listened; James Minor was sobbing aloud. But Jesus had still a final word to say. "And because iniquity shall abound," he continued, "the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure to the end, the same shall be saved. * * *

And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch."

How vivid remains the picture of that evening upon the Mount of Olives! For it was then that the Master recited for our lasting remembrance the parables of the ten virgins and of the talents and of the labourers in the vineyard as recorded on Matthew's tablets; also the foretelling of the Last Judgment when "the sun shall be darkened * * * and the stars of heaven shall fall. * * * Then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. * * * For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so also shall the coming of the Son of man be. * * * Then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on his left. * * * And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal. * * * Pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man."

Through the flower-scented darkness we made our way back to Bethany; there, for this night at least, the Master may sleep in safety.

XXIV

THE PRICE OF BLOOD

N this the fourth day of the week the Master remained at Bethany in entire seclusion; none of us saw or spoke with him. Time dragged heavily on my hands and, late in the afternoon, I walked into the city intent upon learning what official measures were being taken against Jesus. At first, I encountered no one that I knew, but the rumour was in circulation that the Great Council was in session at the Temple, in the Hall of Hewn Stones on the south side of the Court of Israel. I went there and waited. Presently a familiar face emerged; it was that of my uncle Joseph of Arimathæa. Eagerly I went forward to meet him. "I had not known that you were in Jerusalem," I began.

"I was summoned from Cana by Caiaphas himself," he an-

swered.

"But your asthma?"

"Had you not heard that I am now free of that infirmity? And it was Jesus of Nazareth who healed me. Moreover, I have seen and talked with Lazarus of Bethany, and I am persuaded that a great prophet hath arisen in Israel; none other indeed than the Dayspring from on High, the Star of Jacob."

"Then you are one of us-his disciple!" I exclaimed.

"Secretly so. The tide is running strongly against Jesus, and among the one-and-seventy counsellors there is but one other—Nicodemus—who is inclined to stand with me. And what are

two voices against that uproar?"

Joseph went on to say that the discussion had been wordy and acrimonious. Upon only a single point had there been the semblance of agreement—it would be most impolitic to take Jesus openly for fear of a popular uprising. Nevertheless, this stirrer-up of trouble must somehow be suppressed, and a later meeting of the Council would be held this very night at the palace of Caiaphas to consider the matter. And that was all that he could tell me.

At Bethany our company of disciples was quartered in the only inn of the tiny village. The evening meal was eaten in silence and, immediately upon its conclusion, we went with one consent to our rest.

I had slept an hour or more when into my drowsy consciousness came a terrifying sound—the long wail of a wolf, or so it seemed. But when, fully aroused, I sat up and listened, I could hear nothing out of the common. Still that unearthly ululation; surely it had actually beaten upon my sleep-dulled ears, calling me back to the world of reality. I could not disregard it.

Impelled by a sudden thought, I made my way to the cubicle occupied by Judas Iscariot. As I more than half-expected, it was untenanted; on stooping down to examine the pallet of goatskin upon which he had lain, I found it still warm to the

touch.

On retiring for the night I had removed only head-dress and sandals, and so I took but a moment to make ready for departure. Out on the Jerusalem road I sighted a moving figure, and his turban of swart lamb's wool was clearly visible under the rays of the nearly full Paschal moon; this could be none other than the man from Kerioth.

I kept Judas in sight, taking care not to follow too closely upon

his footsteps.

All the city gates were supposed to be closed at an hour after sunset, but in this period of comparative tranquillity the regulation was largely in abeyance, and one entrance, the Sheep Gate, was kept open all night, our Roman overlords contenting themselves with posting there a small guard of legionaries. The Iscariot procured ingress without apparent difficulty; but when I presented myself, the under-officer in command, a mere boy in years, looked a little doubtful. Then I noticed that Longinus had strolled down to the post; he sat by the fire warming himself. When the decision was referred to him, he must have recognized me as a friend to Lucius Verus, for he nodded and vouch-safed a curt yes; I was free to enter the city.

The Iscariot continued in the direction of the High Priest's palace, which was situated on a hill slope in the upper city, the quarter inhabited by wealthy residents and the ecclesiastical

aristocracy. I followed cautiously.

Passing quickly through the exterior court of the palace, Judas said a whispered word to the porter at the inner entrance; presently an under-priest appeared and beckoned to the Iscariot to enter.

I stood in the outer court, uncertain of how to proceed. Perhaps a score of persons were in attendance; they huddled around an immense brasier, for the night was chill.

Again the under-priest presented himself at the inner portal. He began calling off names from a list held in his hand, and one by one the loiterers by the fire left the group and joined him; now I guessed that these were witnesses or informers who had been summoned to attend upon the pleasure of the High Priest.

"Shuel Ben-David." There was a pause; no one seemed to bear that particular name. And then I had an inspiration; without answering vocally I went forward and took my place with the others. My arrival must have completed the tale, for

the under-priest turned, motioning us to follow him.

Traversing the inner court, we entered the palace proper and made our way along a gloomy corridor to the staircase leading to the upper storey; now we were in the vestibule opposite the great

double doors of the council chamber.

"Wait here until your name is called," explained our mentor as he stooped to unlock the door of a small anteroom. But I had no mind to lose my liberty of action, and so I unobtrusively separated myself from the group and found refuge in a side corridor where I was soon out of sight.

Fortunately I was well acquainted with the palace, and I knew that by following this passage to its end and then making a left turn I could reach a small door which opened into the council chamber at the rear. No one was around to question or detain me, and, having gained my objective, I slipped in quietly.

Immediately in front of me rose a screen of carved wood richly gilded; it was intended to shield the throne of the High Priest from wandering currents of air. Part of this screen was of openwork affording a clear vision into the hall, and I soon

selected a convenient vantage-point.

Back of the screen was a dais on which was set the official judgment-seat, a chair with a canopied top brilliant in scarlet lacquer; traditionally it had been brought to Jerusalem by the Maccabæan king John Hyrcanus. It was now occupied by Caiaphas, an immense bulk of a man; his black beard, elaborately curled and oiled, was trimmed to a point that canted a little to the left. He was dressed in a mantle dull-red in colour, embroidered in orange arabesques, and trimmed with gold fringe; it was secured in front by a clasp of square-cut amethysts set in Roman gold. His head-dress was high and its open sides were adorned with hanging ribbons (infulæ) of dark-blue silk.

There was another occupant of the dais. On the right of Caiaphas was a couch heaped high with shawls and cushions. On it sat an old man whose yellow, parchmented skin was wrinkled like to a walnut shell; an emaciated manikin shrunken

to the size of a twelve-year-old boy. His face was thin and wore an ill-humoured expression; his sharp-pointed nose and petulant chin almost met over the tightly-lipped mouth; his eyes, sunken and red-rimmed, sparkled with a certain intelligent malice. Of course, I recognized him at once; this was Annas, formerly High Priest in his own right and father-in-law to the

present incumbent of the office.

The hall was of noble proportions, high-ceilinged, and normally lit by lofty windows. But these were now draped with heavy hangings to forestall espionage by intrusive eyes. For none could be present in the council chamber of the High Priest save the accredited members of the Sanhedrin and the official attendants designated by Caiaphas himself. Ah, but they forget that a mouse may creep in where behemoth dare not venture, and I was reasonably safe from discovery in my hiding-place behind the High Priest's throne.

A thin edge of moonlight stole from under the closely-woven draperies; this, of course, would be wholly insufficient for the illumination of the vast cavern. But a score of lamps, suspended by bronze chains, gave a modicum of light, and this was supplemented by wall-sconces holding torches of fat pine whose flames, flaring wildly in the down draught from the ventilating apertures set high among the roof-beams, lay in pools of flickering

light on the tessellated marble floor.

In front of the dais was a vacant space where the witnesses might stand, and then came a semicircle of low benches for the accommodation of the members of the Sanhedrin, one-and-seventy in number; I quickly picked out Nicodemus and my uncle Joseph of Arimathæa. No one spoke or seemed to move, but the silence was tense with emotion.

An under-priest brought in a man and announced his name and condition—Judas Iscariot, a professed follower of the Naz-

arene rabbi. I gazed at him attentively.

Undoubtedly Judas was still under the spell of his demoniacal possession. He spoke and moved as though in a waking dream, but in the hollow of his ordinarily dead-white cheeks glowed two spots of crimson colour, like to burning coals on a field of snow.

He remained aloof and waiting.

In answer to the questioning of Caiaphas, Judas asserted that he was prepared to disclose the whereabouts of Jesus; the betrayal could be accomplished secretly and so without danger of arousing popular feeling. "How much?" asked the High Priest. But Judas answered not a word. Whereupon Annas motioned to Caiaphas that he should lend an ear in private. Caiaphas com-

plied and there followed a short whispered colloquy. "We will give you," said the High Priest, "thirty pieces of silver."

Judas acted as though he had hardly heard or understood.

But finally he nodded an indifferent assent.

A treasure-chest was brought in and the designated sum disbursed—thirty pieces of the Maccabæan mint; they were oblong in shape, and each coin was pierced with a hole so that the lot

could be strung together on a cord.

Judas was given opportunity to make the tally for himself, but he shook his head. Whereupon the treasurer put the money in a bag whose mouth could be closed by a braided thong of leather. Swiftly and skilfully the Iscariot fashioned the ends of the thong into a complicated knot whose construction was known only to himself. Then he thrust the bag into the bosom of his robe and

stood waiting.

"You will advise us further in this matter," said the High Priest. "And remember," he added harshly, "that the issue must be decided before the Sabbath which is also the Passover." Judas signified his understanding and acquiescence. "Take him away," ordered Caiaphas, and forthwith the Iscariot was conducted from the council chamber. I waited for a few moments and then made my own exit, no one taking the slightest notice

of my movements.

Allowing Judas an half hour of grace, I retook the road to Bethany; and when I arrived at the inn, all was quiet and dark. I stole stealthily to the cubicle allotted to the man from Kerioth. A ray of moonlight from the single window high up in the wall fell full upon his face. As I bent over him, I saw that the red spots on his cheeks had disappeared, his countenance was composed, and his breathing was calm and regular. At his side lay the bag of money; I took possession and carried it to my own quarters. There was no necessity for opening it, since I could plainly feel the coins through the cloth of the bag. Moreover, I had a purpose in not disturbing the safeguard of the Iscariot's knot; only he could have made it and only he should enjoy the privilege of unmaking it. Then I sought my own pallet. But not to slumber, save in unrestful fits and starts. Finally the dawn came, and glad was I to see it.

I have attempted to acquaint the Master with what had happened at the palace of Caiaphas. But I quickly brought my talk to an end; Jesus had listened with attention, but I saw that he knew already all that I could tell him. Yes, and more—how infinitely more!

After midday of this the fifth day of the week, the Master commanded Peter and John to go into the city and make preparation for the eating of the Passover. "There shall meet you," said Jesus, "a man bearing a pitcher of water; follow him into the house where he entereth in. And ye shall say to the goodman of the house, The Master saith unto thee, Where is the guest chamber, where I shall eat the Passover with my disciples? * * * And he shall show you a large upper room furnished: there make ready."

Be it noted that the carrying of water was peculiarly the work of women. That a man should be seen bearing a pitcher could be only in the nature of a secret sign; one that could not be over-

looked nor misunderstood. And such it proved to be.

Simon Peter and John took their departure, the remainder of our company awaiting the further pleasure of the Master. But it was not until long after sunset that Jesus led us into the city. Peter met us at the Sheep Gate and conducted us to a house on the western hill, the residence of a widow woman and of her young son, John-Mark.*

^{*} In this particular year (A. D. 30) the first day of the Passover (the fifteenth Nisan) happened to fall on the Sabbath, the seventh day of the Jewish week. Now it was a long-standing controversy as to whether it were lawful, under such circumstances, to eat the Passover on the night of the sixth day (the fourteenth Nisan), since that was also the preparation for the Sabbath, and the roasting of the Paschal lamb would be in the nature of work and therefore a desecration of Israel's holy day. Whereupon certain strict constructionists held that the Passover supper should be eaten on the evening of the fifth day (the thirteenth Nisan), a setting back of four-and-twenty hours. Others denounced the argument as mere hair-splitting, and there was a wide division of opinion. However, the ruling or Sadducean party had decreed that if anyone desired to celebrate the rite on the earlier day the priests would be authorized to slay the required lamb on the afternoon of the thirteenth Nisan, provided that a double fee be paid. A perfectly natural compromise, Caiaphas and his followers being time-servers and chiefly interested in the material gains of the transaction. Since Jesus was fully aware that He would have made the supreme sacrifice upon the sixth day of the week, His only opportunity for observing the national festival would be to eat the Passover on the fifth day instead of the sixth, an apparent siding with the strict constructionists.

XXV

IN THE UPPER ROOM

HE house of John-Mark's mother was one of the largest and handsomest residences in the southwest quarter of the city; indeed in the richness of its appointments and in the extent and beauty of its gardens, it was excelled only by the palace of Joseph of Arimathæa. John-Mark was at the portal to receive us, and Peter whispered to me that he had been the man bearing a pitcher of water who had fulfilled the Master's prevision by guiding to his mother's house the two disciples sent by

Jesus.

The upper room was a spacious apartment lit by several large lamps suspended by chains from the ceiling; these lamps were of the usual baked-clay type, the wicks being of twisted flax floating in perfumed olive oil. The ordinary furniture had been removed in preparation for the *Pascha*. In ancient times it had been customary to eat the supper in a standing position, the company wearing rough travelling clothes and holding their staves in hand to symbolize the impending flight out of Egypt. But in our day the guests were attired in festal garb and reclined on couches ranged in the form of an inverted U about the low table on which the viands were placed. At each corner of this table stout rings were fixed. Through these rings passed ropes attached to the roof-beams, thereby making it possible to suspend the table a few inches above the floor. This was a precaution against accidental defilement under the Levitical code.

But could this be indeed the Paschal feast? True, there were the plates of unleavened bread; the flagon of red wine mixed with water and flanked by the common cup; the provision of bitter herbs—coriander, endive, thistle leaves, succory, and radish; the bowls of salted water and vinegar; and the thick slab of crushed fruits and nuts, coloured red in commemoration of the dreary work of brickmaking under the lash of our Egyptian taskmasters. But where was the place traditionally reserved for the prophet Elijah, the forerunner; where was his special cup which must be ritually filled at the prescribed intervals? Even more significant, there was no evidence of the roasted lamb, the essential

body of the feast. Wondering, I waited to see what would hap-

pen.

There was an undercurrent of dispute among the disciples as to who should occupy the places of honour at the table. Jesus was quick to discern the nature of the discussion; and, characteristically, to put an end to it. As master of the feast, he would, of course, be entitled to the central divan of the western range of couches; he indicated that John should be directly on his right hand. But who should lie on Jesus' left hand? None other than Judas Iscariot, the man from Kerioth!

I found myself at the left of Judas and next to me reclined James Minor, the rest of our company disposing themselves as chance would have it. But I remember that Simon Peter, whose voice as usual had been the most vehement among the disputants, now hastened to show his penitence by taking the lowest place of

all, the end couch of the eastern range.

Jesus, having girded himself with a towel after the fashion of a slave, filled a basin with water from a copper ewer and turned first to Simon Peter. "Thou shalt never wash my feet," exclaimed Peter discerning the purpose in the Master's mind. "If I wash thee not," answered Jesus, "thou hast no part with me." And Simon, responsive as ever to the Master's direct appeal, yielded; "Lord," he said, "not my feet only, but also my hands and my head."

And so the rite proceeded as Jesus came to each of us in turn. "Now," said Jesus, "ye are clean"—he paused momentarily—"but not all." It was a tense moment, for, as John tells us, "he knew who should betray him." I cast a sidelong glance at Judas on my right. But his countenance remained wholly impassive.

We began to eat and the common cup passed from hand to hand. But there was a foreboding in the air, like to the hush preceding the advent of a thunder-storm. A lightning flash—the voice of the Master—at once broke the tension and induced a new suspense. "Verily," spake Jesus, "I say unto you, one of you which eateth with me shall betray me."

A long moment passed in silence. "Is it I?" quoth Simon Peter and his lips trembled as he spoke. One by one the other disciples re-echoed the query: "Lord, is it I?" And the last

voice was that of Judas Iscariot.

"The Son of man," continued the Master, "indeed goeth as it is written of him: but woe to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! good were it for that man if he had never been born."

There was another foreboding pause. John, the disciple

whom Jesus especially loved, lay with his head on the Master's breast; to him Peter beckoned and John understood. "Lord, who is it?" asked John speaking in a scarcely audible whisper.

"He it is," answered Jesus, "to whom I shall give a sop, when

I have dipped it."

The Master broke off two small pieces of the unleavened cake, placed between them a sprig of thistle leaves and a bitter radish, and dipped the sop thus formed into the bowl of sour wine. All eyes followed his every movement; he turned and handed the morsel to the man from Kerioth. "That thou doest, do quickly," said Jesus. Immediately Judas rose from his couch, strapped on his sandals, threw his cloak about his shoulders, and went swiftly to the door of the apartment. But there he stopped and looked back.

Who shall dare to plumb the abyss of any human heart? (Least of all, perhaps, his own.) But I felt that I understood. Up to this very instant the wretched man had been unaware of the full degree of his lost and ruined state. I had indeed warned him concerning the several lapses from moral conduct of which I had been a witness, and I had entreated him to seek succour from our common master. If Judas were really a victim of demoniac possession, then his only hope was to turn to Jesus whom the devils themselves recognized as Lord and before whom they trembled. But the Iscariot, panoplied in pride, had refused; and now he must pay the price of his self-sufficiency. The day of grace had ended; having abjured the service of Jesus, the Iscariot must now go to his own place and accept the eternal overlordship of that other master—the Power of Darkness. He went out. A little interval of suspense, and then that heart-shaking cry which came shrieking down the gusty street lit up by the radiance of a full moon—an orb of pale silver etched upon a sky of indigo!

Once more had Satan entered into him.

The voice of the Master broke the silence. "Little children," he said, "yet a little while I am with you. * * * Whither I go, ye cannot come."

"Lord, whither goest thou?" asked Simon Peter.

"Whither I go, thou canst not follow me now; but thou shalt follow me afterwards."

"Lord, why cannot I follow thee now?" insisted Peter. "I

will lay down my life for thy sake."

"Wilt thou lay down thy life for my sake?" retorted Jesus.

"Verily, verily I say unto thee, The cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied me thrice."

Peter shook his shaggy head in indignant bewilderment; he seemed about to protest, but an invisible bridle restrained his tongue. Moreover, the Master himself now commanded every eye and ear.

Jesus had picked up one of the flat, round cakes of unleavened bread; he brake it and handed a crumb to each one of us in turn. "Take, eat; this is my body," he said. Silently we obeyed the

injunction.

Filling the common cup (I remember that it was a pear-shaped chalice, massive and highly polished; its foot was of virgin gold ornamented with the chasing of a pelican feeding her young, and set with precious stones; probably this vessel constituted the chiefest of the family treasures), Jesus gave thanks and blessed it. "Drink ye all of it," he continued, "for this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until the day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."

The chalice passed from hand to hand until all had partaken. Yet not all, for Judas Iscariot had already departed—gone to his

own place.

Conscious of a new enlightenment of soul, endued with an inexplicable accession of strength not our own but communicated through some mystical channel from an exhaustless reservoir of power, we sat and listened as the Master began his final discourse to us who had known and loved him. John, in his Gospel, has set down this last message, and I am transcribing here only the words which more particularly impressed me.

Jesus said: "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many man-

sions: * * * I go to prepare a place for you."

Thomas interrupted. "Lord," he said, "we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way?"

Jesus said: "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man

cometh unto the Father, but by me."

"Lord, show us the Father," cried Philip, "and it sufficeth

Jesus said: "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father. * * * And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. * * * He that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will make manifest myself to him."

"Lord," asked Jude, "how is it that thou wilt manifest thy-

self unto us, and not unto the world?"

Jesus said: "If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. * * * But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. * * * Abide in me, and I in you. * * * As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love. If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love. * * * This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

Jesus said: "These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended. They shall put you out of the synagogue: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service. * * * But these things have I told you, when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them. * * * Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him

unto you."

Jesus prayed: "Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee: as thou hast given him power over all flesh that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent. I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. * * * I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world; thine they were, and thou gavest them me. * * * I pray for them. * * * Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are. While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of

perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled. * * * I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. * * * Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. * * * O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee: but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me. And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them. * * * Arise, let us go hence."

Together we sang the ancient hymn as recorded in Psalm CXXXVI: "O give thanks unto the Lord: for he is good: for his mercy endureth forever." Then, led by the Master, we left the upper room and proceeded, by way of the Valley Gate and under Hezekiah's wall, through Gehenna and the ravine of the Kidron, unto the Mount of Olives. And there followed us, at a discreet distance, the young son of the household, John-Mark; having risen hastily from his bed, he had nothing but a linen sheet cast about his body.*

* As I look back over the years, I am more than ever assured that this Last Supper in the upper room was neither the Jewish Passover, nor yet that central feature of our Christian faith, the Holy Eucharist. Doubtless this view may conflict with commonly accepted tradition, but let us consider what warrant we may draw from the established facts.

True it is, that three of the Evangelists refer specifically to the Passover

in their account of the Last Supper. It must be remembered, however, that neither Mark nor Luke was actually present, and their versions are but variants of the story as told by Matthew. John, who was an eye-witness, describes the solemn event merely as a "supper."

There is no mention of that all-important constituent of the Paschal

There is no mention of that all-important constituent of the Faschal feast, the lamb. And, on the other hand, when Jesus said to Judas, "That thou doest, do quickly," there was a misapprehension of His meaning among the disciples: according to John, "Some of them thought, because Judas had the bag, that Jesus had said to him, Buy those things (i. e. the sacrificial lamb) that we have need of against the feast," a clear intimation that the Passover proper was to be celebrated on the evening of the following day, the fourteenth Nisan. But this latter was the sixth day of the Jewish week and the preparation of the Sabhath. And when that hour had struck. week and the preparation of the Sabbath. And when that hour had struck, the tragedy of Calvary had been accomplished.

Furthermore, while the words of institution: "This is my body; this is my blood," suggest the Eucharist, yet this could not have been the actual Sacrament, since Jesus was still living in His proper person; the bread and wine remained the accidents and not the essence of the rite. Therefore, the conclusion appears reasonable that the Last Supper was the shadow of the Old Dispensation; a prefigurement and only a prefigurement of the New Dispensation. The Last Supper could not have been the Jewish Passover, Lispensation. The Last Supper could not have been the Jewish Passover, since its essential element, the body of a slain lamb, was not in evidence; it could not have been the Christian Eucharist, since the body of our Blessed Lord had not as yet been offered for the sins of the world. It follows that the Last Supper was but a simple community meal among a little company of friends just before they were to be parted from their glorious head; it

XXVI

"WOMAN, I KNOW HIM NOT"

HE fertile western slope of the Mount of Olives was checkered with the gardens, villa sites, and orchards of well-to-do citizens of Jerusalem. One of the most attractive of these enclosures was the Garden of Gethsemane. property had been placed at the disposal of the Master by its owner whom I suspected to be none other than Nicodemus, and Tesus made frequent use of it as a haven of rest and retirement. The garden was surrounded by an high hedge of quickset (the thorny cactus) to protect its grove of fine olive trees from animals and unauthorized intruders. An oil-press (from which the property took its name) stood in the middle of the plot; at present, of course, the press was not working, since the time of the olive harvest was not yet come. A beautiful and secret retreat in which Jesus could be secure from his enemies; but I reflected, with some uneasiness, that its existence was well known to the Iscariot. Under the pale light of a watery moon we made our way to the garden; the night was still and comparatively warm, and there was a smell of sap from the newly-budded orchards. The hour was close to the beginning of the third watch (Roman time). Our minds were confused and our hearts heavy, for during the walk Jesus had spoken plainly on what must shortly come to pass. "All ye shall be offended because of me this night," said the Master, "for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered. But after that I am risen, I will go before you into Galilee."

In a stunned silence we listened; that is, all but Simon Peter, who, unmindful of the warning given him at the Last Supper,

protested hotly.

"Simon, Simon," returned the Master, "Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not."

was a memorial of past grace and mercy—the Old Dispensation—and also the promise and the pattern of that immortal bounty—the New Covenant which forevermore should be the sustenance of our longing spirits, the refreshment of our thirsty souls.

"Lord," said Peter, "I am ready to go with thee into prison, and to death. * * * Although all shall be offended, yet will not I."

"I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before

that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me."

Peter's face flushed redly at this second intimation that he should fail Jesus in the hour of trial. "Though I should die without thee," he insisted, "yet will I not deny thee."

Emboldened by Simon Peter's declaration, we all echoed it. Jesus said no further word; he only looked on each of us in turn, a look that we were to remember all the rest of our lives.

The Master had summoned to his side Peter and James and John. The rest of the company were to remain near the entrance to the garden. But I made out the flutter of white drapery in a clump of trees further on; doubtless this would be the young man John-Mark, and it must be to him that we owe

the circumstantial account of the agony in the garden.

Jesus, with his three companions, had withdrawn into the central shadows of the enclosure. The night wind was growing stronger and colder, and so I went over to the oil-press and sat down in its shelter. Someone had followed me, and in the half-light I recognized James Minor; his slight form was shaking with a nervous chill. I drew him closer and threw over his shoulders a corner of the woolen robe I was wearing. We spoke no word; and, worn out by the stress and anxiety of the day, we must have fallen on sleep. It was very quiet and very still.

And now, as Matthew records, "He began to be sorrowful

and very heavy."

Jesus turned to the chosen three. "My soul," he said, "is exceeding sorrowful unto death: tarry ye here, and watch."

About the cast of a stone away there was a shallow grotto among the rocks. Thither the Master repaired alone, there he knelt and prayed. "O my Father," he cried, "if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt." Then, according to Matthew, he returned to where he had left Peter and James and John, and found them asleep. "What," said Jesus to Peter, "could ye not watch with me one hour? * * * The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." A second time he went away; once more that impassioned prayer: "O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done." Again the Master sought out his specially preferred disciples; again he discovered them sunken in slumber; again he returned to solitude. And now, according to Luke, "Being in an agony he prayed more earnestly:

and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down

to the ground."

For the third time Jesus left the grotto and came to where Peter and James and John slept unheeding on their rough bed of fallen leaves. "Sleep on now, and take your rest," he said with quiet finality as the three men sprang to their feet, their eyes still heavy and uncomprehending.

Struggling out of the deep of unconsciousness, I heard the voice of the Master, a voice loud and compelling, as he continued: "It is enough, the hour is at hand; behold, the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise up, let us go; lo,

he that betrayeth me is at hand."

At first I neither saw nor heard anything. Then, at a turn in the road leading down from the eastern portal of the city, I made out a number of moving lights—torches and cressets and lanterns. I listened and caught the regular rhythm of marching men. Nearer and nearer they came, a detachment of the Temple guard, or, more accurately, police force; their wooden clogs clattered noisily over the flints of the roadway. And following the constabulary, came a crowd of idlers and curiosity-mongers -rabble of the baser sort such as is sure to spring up on the fringe of any happening which promises to feed the vulgar craving for excitement. The guard carried weapons—swords and staves—and leading them stalked Hananiah; he had lately been made a member of the Sanhedrin as a reward for his noteworthy religious zeal; doubtless he was present to safeguard the interests of Caiaphas. Death had deprived Hananiah of the assistance of Joel, but there was another now to serve his turn, for at Hananiah's side walked Judas of Kerioth. I saw that the red spot glowed on the sunken cheeks of the Iscariot, indicating that he was again under the spell of his demoniacal possession—the mark of the Beast.

The procession entered the enclosure. There was no need to search for its quarry; Jesus, disdaining the futility of flight, had advanced to meet Hananiah and his followers. "Whom seek

ye?" he demanded.

The stature of Jesus seemed suddenly to have attained gigantic proportions, a flicker of flame danced in his eyes, and his voice held the sharp edge of a spear. A trick of my overwrought imagination? Surely not my fancy alone, for with one accord the leading file of armed guards recoiled, jostling their fellows in the second rank; several men lost their footing and fell to the ground. Confusion reigned. I sensed behind me the sound of

scurrying feet, and I realized that the other disciples had fled in every direction; save Simon Peter only—Peter with an unsheathed sword in his hand!

The majestic form of the Master continued to dominate the scene, and for the moment an unreasoning hope possessed me; surely Jesus was about to pass unscathed through the midst of his enemies as he had done at Nazareth and in the Temple; soon these greedy hands would be clutching at the empty air and the dangerous moment would be past.

But Judas was equal to the crisis; he stepped forward. "Hail,

Master," he said, and kissed Jesus on the cheek.

Judas kissed him!

"Friend," returned Jesus, "wherefore art thou come? * * *

Betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?"

Two or three of the Temple guard laid hold upon the Master. Peter, raising his sword, struck at one of the assailants, a body-servant of the High Priest by the name of Malchus. The blow glanced off the man's head, inflicting a wound upon his ear; it bled freely and Malchus screamed with the sudden pain. Peter stood his ground, breathing heavily.

"Put up again thy sword into his place," commanded the Master. * * * "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me twelve legions of angels?"

Twelve legions of angels! so that should be the way of it. Already I sensed the whirring of gigantic wings and the dazzling radiance of the bright-harnessed host of heaven. But once more the Master was speaking.

Jesus said: "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" And then, bending forward, he touched the ear of Malchus, and immediately the blood staunched. Simon Peter melted back into the shadows and I saw him no more.

Twelve legions of angels—what the Father might have given! A cup of sorrow—what the Father did give! How incomprehensible!

The Master rounded upon Hananiah. "Be ye come out," said Jesus, "as against a thief, with swords and staves? When I was daily with you in the temple, ye stretched forth no hand against me: but this is your hour, and the power of darkness, * * * that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled."

Obeying a nod from Hananiah, again they laid hands upon him. And this time there was no one to gainsay the Master's foes. Seized with a panic fear, I ran for the shelter of the oilpress, but my feet became entangled with something soft and clinging. I looked down and recognized the linen sheet which

the young John-Mark had worn about his body; in his terror he had cast it from him as he struggled in the grasp of the constabulary, fleeing naked into the night.

"And they bound him and led him away."

"What could I have done?" I panted in weak resentment. "One against so many!" But even as I strove to excuse myself, I was conscious that I too had failed the Master, even Jesus our dearly beloved companion and friend. Cautiously I stole to the entrance gate of the garden. Far down in the ravine of the Kidron twinkled a multitude of lights; I realized that Hananiah and his band were taking the valley road in order to avoid the dangerous passage through the city streets. At the turn, where the walls of Hezekiah and of Solomon come together, there was the Harsith Gate from which a flight of steps led up to the slope between the upper city and the Tyrophæon on which stood the palace of Annas. Yes, that would be where they were taking Jesus. The salt was stinging my eyelids as I watched; now the lights of the distant procession vanished and all was dark and still.

Yet I was not wholly alone; I had stumbled over the body of a prostrate man; I looked down and made out the features of Judas Iscariot. The significant red spots had disappeared, but his sleep was not the quiet rest of the previous occasions upon which I had watched him coming out of a seizure by his familiar demon; he moaned and tossed from side to side. I touched him with my foot: he sat up sharply.

"What has happened?" he demanded. "I dreamed—it was

a frightful dream."

"It was no dream. You have betrayed the Master to his enemies. With a kiss!"

"A dream," he repeated. "A frightful dream!" But his

voice was hoarse and shaken.

"This at least is real," I retorted as I drew from the bosom of my robe the bag of silver coin. "Here is the price of your treachery. I took it from you last night at Bethany, following upon your return from the secret visit to the palace of Caiaphas." I flung the bag at his feet.

"It is not mine! I never saw it before."

"How about the knot by which the thong is secured? A knot

known to you and to you alone."

Judas shook his head incredulously. Then, with hands that trembled, he fumbled with the fastening. It came loose and

the contents of the bag poured out upon the ground—thirty pieces of silver. "The price of a slave," I reminded him. Yes,

the price of a slave!

Judas answered no word and I left him there, still staring at the little heap of silver money that bore the tarnished imprint of the Maccabæan mint.

Taking the shortest route through the city streets, I arrived, breathless with running, at the palace of Annas. All was dark and silent, but the porter told me that Annas had sent the pris-

oner bound to Caiaphas; I ran on.

The official residence of Caiaphas, a huge block of building, had two courts, an outer and an inner. The street doors were closed, but in the right-hand leaf there was a latticed wicket, hard by the porter's lodge. A crowd of curiosity-seekers packed the archway, but I pushed my way through them and gained the wicket. Looking into the court, I caught a glimpse of John just as he was disappearing into the inner enclosure. And there was Peter crouched in the circle of men who warmed themselves at a brasier. Peter had concealed his face with a corner of his robe, but there was no mistaking those mighty shoulders and that mop of flaming hair. I knew that John had acquaintance with an influential member of the High Priest's household, and he had probably enlisted that man's good offices to obtain admission. Also it appeared that John had persuaded the damsel who kept the door to let Simon Peter enter, but the latter could venture no further than the outer court.

The minutes dragged endlessly. Presently several men appeared from the inner precincts of the palace and were afforded egress by the portress. I tried to get a word with one of them, but he merely scowled and hurried on. It seemed likely that they were messengers despatched by Caiaphas to summon as many of the Great Council as could be found to attend an official meeting at daybreak in the Hall of Hewn Stones. It must be remembered that our Jewish law ordains that no trial in which capital punishment might be involved could be held except in the daytime. Evidently the wily Annas had urged upon his sonin-law the necessity of initiating the proceedings against Jesus without delay; ratification of the judgment now in process could be made by the Sanhedrin at dawn, thereby satisfying the formal letter of the statute. And my surmise was correct as later events were to prove.

I watched the portress as she suddenly left her post and joined the circle of men by the fire; she stared curiously at Simon Peter and then spoke to him. Peter shook his head and tried to edge away, but the woman was persistent. Now she had raised her voice and the words carried to my ears. "Art not thou also one of this man's disciples?" she asked.

"I am not," shouted Peter. "Woman, I know him not."

The portress walked away as though satisfied with Peter's disclaimer. But quickly she returned, accompanied by one of the palace maid-servants. The two women confronted Peter who tried to stare back at them and failed miserably.

"This fellow was also with Jesus of Galilee," declared the girl.

"I know not what thou sayest," again denied Peter, but there was a fatal hesitation in his voice.

Another servant, kin to that same Malchus whose ear Simon Peter had wounded, interrupted. "Did I not see thee in the garden with him?" he asked. Whereupon one of the loungers by the fire chimed in, saying, "Surely thou also art one of them: for thou art a Galilæan, and thy speech betrayeth thee."

Peter, badgered to the limit of his endurance, completely lost his head. "I know not this man of whom ye speak," he cried, bolstering up his defiance by a string of curses redolent of our

rough Galilæan countryside.

From a great ways off came the crowing of a cock. Peter heard the fatal sound and remembered; ah yes, he remembered!

Framed in the archway of the inner door of the palace stood

the Master. And Jesus looked at Peter.

With an ejaculation that was scarcely human, more like to the scream of a wounded horse, Peter turned and made for the outer entrance; the portress ran before him and threw open the gate. Peter plunged forward, and so terrible was his face that no hand was raised to stay him. He was weeping, but here were no facile, womanish tears; he wept as only a man, a strong man, weeps—dry, choking sobs that seemed to wrack asunder both soul and body. He passed so close to me that I could have touched him; then he strode into the darkness, his head bowed and his great shoulders heaving. Again the cock crew.

With Caiaphas at their head, the detachment of police crossed the outer court and debouched into the street. And in the middle rank walked Jesus; his hands were now unbound and his head was held high.

Last of all came John. I stopped him. "They have found him guilty?" I queried.

John nodded sombrely. "Of death," he amended.

I had foreseen the verdict, but for the moment I was crushed

into speechlessness. Then I tried to pull myself together. "Tell me," I demanded. "How could the condemnation have been accomplished?"

"Perhaps a score of priests and scribes had been hastily

brought together," began John.

"Caiaphas inquired of the Master concerning his doctrine.

Whereupon Jesus answered: 'I spake openly to the world * * * in the synagogues and in the temple; and in secret have I said nothing. Why askest thou me? ask them which heard me, what I have said unto them: * * * behold they know what I said."

"And then?"

"One of the official attendants, Eliab by name, struck Jesus on

the mouth with the palm of his hand."

I ground my teeth as John continued. "Yes, he struck the Master, saying: 'Answerest thou the high priest so?' Jesus said: 'If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why smitest thou me?""

"They had their witnesses of course."

"Yes, but none of them could agree in their testimony. At length, however, two perjurers were found who declared: 'This fellow said, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands.' Whereupon Caiaphas rose from his seat and shouted: 'Answerest thou nothing? what is it which these witness against thee?' But still Jesus remained silent, and Caiaphas proceeded to the formal and terrible formula of interrogation. 'I adjure thee, by the living God,' he said, 'that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God.' Jesus faced him. 'I am,' asserted the Master, 'and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven."

'Ah!" In my excitement I seemed hardly to breathe.

"Caiaphas rent his clothes," said John. "'What need we any further witnesses?' he asked, and his voice was deadly in its quiet and measured tones. 'Ye have heard the blasphemy; what think ye?' The answer came quickly. 'He is guilty of death,' they declared."

"All of them?"

"Yes, all of them. Whereupon Eliab again approached Jesus and this time he spat in his face. A nod to his underlings and the Master was blindfolded with a strip of linen cloth. Repeatedly Eliab struck Jesus on the mouth. 'Prophesy unto us, thou Christ,' he mocked. 'Who is he that smote thee?' And the pack followed his example, buffeting the Master, and shouting their injurious reproaches. But Jesus answered never a word."

I groaned as John concluded the shameful recital. "Where

are they taking him?" I asked.

John pointed to the east where the first pink of dawn was flushing the golden spikes on the roof of the Temple. "To the Hall of Hewn Stones where the Sanhedrin is now being assembled," he replied.

"Will you be present at the hearing?"

"What would be the use? It is a mere formality. Besides I have no means of entrance there. Unless your uncle Jo-

seph ----'

"He will not be in attendance, I am sure. Nor Nicodemus. Their voices would have no weight, and they would wish to keep their hands clean of the infamy. Moreover, as you say, the only business is to give legal affirmation to the judgment already delivered."

I have made up my mind. There is but one possible way in which I can keep in touch with the march of events—the friendly offices of Verus. I feel certain that he will not fail me.

As I hurried towards the castle of Antonia, I heard the sound of trumpets, and the next instant a brilliantly accoutred cavalcade swept into view, the first rays of the rising sun reflected on their burnished breastplates and gilding the imperial eagles of the military standards. And that dread figure with its sullen face sitting heavily on a milk-white Arabian stallion-none other than the Procurator Pontius Pilate riding up from his seaside palace at Cæsarea to be present in Jerusalem over the dangerous period of the Passover week. He would be quartered as usual in the old Herodian palace which was situated near the Jaffa Gate of the western wall. Following the cavalry escort came a horse litter flanked by an honour guard of black-skinned Nubians; they wore saffron-tinted burnouses with coral-studded girdles, and their turbans were wound about with ropes of manycoloured tourmalines, a dazzling show of purple and amber. The curtains of the palanquin were closely drawn for protection against the frosty air of early morning. But behind them would be seated Claudia Procula; and doubtless also Lilli. jingling bit-chains and the clank of weapons upon armour the pageant swept forward.

Yes, I will go to Verus and bespeak his aid for what I have in mind.

XXVII

PILATE AND HEROD RENEW FRIENDSHIP

UICKLY I made my way to the Tower of Antonia, and was fortunate in finding my friend on the esplanade; he had but just returned from paying an official visit to the Procurator at the palace of Herod the Great. Having dismissed the guard of honour, Verus turned to me with affectionate concern plainly visible in his bearing. "You look tired and anxious, my Nathanael," he exclaimed. "I suppose it is this wretched business involving your friend, the young rabbi of Nazareth."

"Then you know of the arrest of Jesus?"

"Why yes. Hardly had the Governor dismounted than he was obliged to give audience to Caiaphas, who had come in person to demand an immediate hearing of the case. Since the sentence passed by your Sanhedrin is a capital one, it must be approved, of course, by the imperial government before it can be carried into effect."

"So the Great Council has already condemned Jesus," I com-

mented. "And on what ground?"

"Apparently because he asserted himself to be the Christ, the Anointed One, the Son of God. Though why there should be such a pother about a mere matter of words is quite beyond me. Moreover, the Procurator is of the same thinking," added Verus with a shrug of his shoulders. "You see Pontius Pilate gave a banquet at Cæsarea last night in honour of the Emperor's name-day, and the festivities were so prolonged that the Governor decided to make an early-morning journey to Jerusalem, and take his long-deferred rest at the palace. But Caiaphas was insistent, and Pilate, much against his will, has been obliged to yield. The hearing will be held within half an hour, and I am commanded to furnish a detachment of legionaries to preserve order. All in all, a serious piece of business," said Verus.

"A favour; you will not deny me?"

"What is it?"

[&]quot;I must be an eye-witness to what happens, and there is but

one way in which that may be brought about: enlist me as a supernumerary of the Twelfth Legion."

"Nothing easier." Verus glanced at me a little doubtfully.

"But that newly-grown beard of yours must come off."

"I quite understand that."

"You will find shaving apparatus in my private apartments. I will have the clothing and equipment sent to you at once."

Verus hurried away, and I proceeded to the task of transforming my facial appearance. Hardly had my cheeks and chin been scraped clean than a servant presented himself with the full accoutrements of a legionary—the helmet with its semi-lunar crest of horsehair, the corselet and pectoral formed of heavy strips of bronze metal, greaves of coarse cloth, sandals furnished with leather thongs that bound the lower leg to well above the anklejoint, and a circular iron shield. The arms included a short spear (pilum), a double-edged Spanish sword, and a dagger. I felt stiff and awkward in this unaccustomed attire, but presently I was ready to assume my new character part in the mighty drama.

Verus, attended by Longinus, was awaiting me; the Tribune gave me a swiftly appraising glance. "You are to be included in all special details," he whispered. "Longinus here understands that," he concluded aloud. "Yes," assented the centurion. I took my place in the half-maniple of soldiery and the march to the Herodian palace began immediately.

The sky, clear at sunrise, was now overcast with heavily tumescent clouds. A little hail fell from time to time, the ice-balls crunching under our sandals as we trudged along; the wind

although light was bitterly cold and penetrating.

A magnificent structure, this palace of Herod the Great. There were two colossal wings connecting with a central hall of vast dimensions; the latter was said to contain an hundred dining couches, and the pavements and colonnades shone with the rarest marbles in the world. The palace stood in its own gardens, a ravishing pleasance of greenery and floral colour intersected by canals of flowing water, whilst fountains cast their crystal spray high into the air and flocks of doves preened their iridescent feathers in the glittering pools. Truly a paradise, but on this inclement morn the rainbow-hued parterres were a splotch of dull drab, and the birds, their plumage upruffled, roosted shivering in the still half-naked branches.

Simultaneously with our arrival appeared the Temple guard conveying Jesus from the Hall of Hewn Stones to the hearing before Pilate. Hananiah was in command of the party. Caiaphas was not officially in evidence, but I caught sight of him in the shadow of the outer gateway. Also there was a motley rabble of curiosity-mongers, lesser priests, and hangers-on. The throng was comparatively small in number, for it was still very early in the morning and the bruit of the recent happenings had not as yet gone widely abroad. But stragglers, in groups of two

or three, were constantly arriving.

Legally the arraignment should have been held in the castle of Antonia, the military garrison post. But Pilate, irritated by these unwarrantable demands upon his time and patience, had determined to be pushed no further; he would convene his court at the palace—or nowhere. Since, however, no pious Jew would enter a Gentile dwelling on the eve of the Passover for fear of ceremonial defilement, the Procurator had so far unbent as to agree that the proceedings should be conducted in the open air. immediately in front of the great central hall. Here a raised platform had been hastily erected and on it stood the Governor's official judgment-seat, a lordly cushioned chair of marble and ivory, inset with semi-precious gems and ornamented by heavily gilded eagles; at its right was a three-legged table on which lay the fasces (an axe bound in a bundle of rods), the ancient emblem of Roman authority. Strictly speaking, Pontius Pilate had no right to display the fasces since he was not of viceregal rank, nor was he entitled to have lictors in attendance. This indeed had been one of the points of variance between Pilate and Herod Antipas, the Tetrarch losing no opportunity for twitting the Procurator with his ostentatious display of emblems and insignia not belonging to his official status.

Longinus disposed his legionaries in the wings, while several secretaries or writers ranged themselves behind the judgment-seat. Presently the Procurator made his appearance. He was clothed in his toga prætexta, a full vesture of cream-coloured wool with a rich border of Tyrian purple. Underneath the robe he wore a short linen tunic with a gold-embroidered belt, and on his feet half-boots of soft leather were laced. Pilate looked tired and he drew the toga more closely about his shoulders as he

felt the bite of the chilly breeze.

With a curt nod, the Governor indicated that the prisoner should be brought before him. Jesus advanced with steady step and stood confronting the man in whose hands lay the issues of life and death. The twain faced each other, and it was Pilate who dropped his eyes. Petulantly the Procurator demanded the nature of the charge, and a confused murmur of voices arose. Pilate held up his official wand to enforce silence; then Hana-

niah stepped forward, his countenance overcast with a pale malevolence. "We found this fellow," he began, "perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar, saying that he himself is Christ a King."

The Procurator frowned; this savoured uncommonly of sedition, and Rome would not be pleased. "Art thou the King of

the Jews?" he demanded of the Master.

"Thou sayest it," countered Jesus. * * * "Sayest thou this

thing of thyself, or did another tell it of me?"

"Am I a Jew?" sneered Pilate. "Thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered thee unto me: what hast thou done?"

"My kingdom is not of this world:" answered Jesus, "if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews."

"Art thou a king then?"

"Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, * * * that I should bear witness unto the truth."

"What is truth?" asked Pilate, as though welcoming the

diversion. But his voice was low and troubled.

Whatever reply the Master might have essayed to make was drowned in a flood of vociferations from the now steadily augmenting crowd; charges and counter-charges were freely bandied in the uproar. But to these empty and unfounded accusations Jesus deigned no answer.

"Answerest thou nothing?" interposed Pilate, again quelling the confusion by a wave of his wand; the legionaries moved a step nearer with pikes at the level, and the crowd about to surge upon the platform fell back sullenly. "Answerest thou nothing?" repeated the Governor. "Behold how many things they

witness against thee."

Still Jesus kept silence, and Pilate showed plainly his feelings of doubt and annoyance; what sort of person was this Jesus of Nazareth? Then he stiffened. "I find no fault in this man," he declared and drew a long defiant breath. The mob snarled its rage, and Pilate glared back at his tormentors. "No fault," he reiterated.

With measured bitterness Hananiah resumed his rôle of principal accuser. "He stirreth up the people," he shouted, "teaching throughout all Jewry, beginning from Galilee to this place."

"Galilee!" echoed the Governor. "Is this man indeed a

Galilæan?"

There could be no gainsaying of this question of fact and the Procurator's brow cleared; he announced curtly that he would send Jesus to Antipas for judgment, since plainly the case fell within Herod's jurisdiction; thus Pilate would be delivered from an uncomfortable dilemma. He ordered that the prisoner be taken at once to the Hasmonæan palace where the Tetrarch happened to be in temporary residence. There was a flood of protests to which the Procurator paid no attention, and Longinus proceeded to carry out the Governor's commands. The legionaries, forming in a hollow square about the Master, took up the march, and the crowd parted unwillingly to give us passage; Pontius Pilate went back into the palace. As we debouched through the gateway, the burning eyes of Caiaphas rested momentarily upon Jesus, but he said no word. Hananiah, however, held a whispered colloquy with the High Priest; he then joined the mob that followed the soldiers.

I wondered if the Master knew me in my unwonted garb; certainly he saw me, since I was walking almost at his elbow, but he gave no sign of recognition. I was confident, however, that he would understand why I was enlisted in the ranks of his official warders.

It was well past the first hour of the day (by our Jewish reckoning), but the dawn was still obscured by low-lying clouds; and in the gloomy pile of the old palace of the Hasmonæan kings, situated on the east side of the hill that overlooked the Temple, lights twinkled fitfully. The sentry at the portal, recognizing Longinus and the insignia of the Twelfth Legion, made no difficulty about admitting our official party, but Hananiah and his followers were compelled to remain just inside the entrance door.

It was a strange sight that met our eyes. Swinging lamps, which made an imperfect illumination in the huge hall, revealed, at the farther end, a couch whereon sat none other than Herod Antipas, Tetrarch of Galilee and perhaps the ablest of the sons of Herod the Great. It was commonly known that Antipas was subject to attacks of sleeplessness, and when the fit was on him he was accustomed to summon a solitary lute player, who played and sang for him. The music ceased abruptly with our entrance.

A strange figure of a man, made stranger by his incessantly moving hands; some obscure physical ailment had so affected his manual processes that repose had become impossible, and his fingers fluttered as though they were a flock of hungry birds intent on picking up grains of corn from the threshing floor. Never for an instant was Herod free from that terrible shaking palsy, and when he desired wine an attendant had to place the cup at his lips.

The Tetrarch looked at us, and the glance from his abnormally protuberant eyes was as cold as a wind blowing over the eternal ice-fields of the upper Lebanon range. "Who comes and why?" he demanded in a voice so powerful that it seemed incredible it could have proceeded from that sunken chest. A loud voice indeed but curiously devoid of resonance; it sounded as hollow as though it were emitted from an empty and withered gourd.

"Jesus of Nazareth!" echoed Herod as Longinus made answer. "Ah, I have heard much of this wonder-worker; bring him before me." Intently the Tetrarch gazed at the Master, and a species of lively satisfaction momentarily transformed that impassive countenance; he even tried to rub his hands together, but found it impossible to control their nervous agitation. "Yes, I have heard of this man," repeated Herod, "and I would witness some of his reputed marvels. My flagon of Greek vintage is running low, but here is a vessel filled with water; command, Nazarene, that it be made wine—Falernian for choice."

The Master looked at Herod, but made no motion to comply with the request. Whereupon the Tetrarch changed his tone; he spoke ingratiatingly, almost pleadingly. "Too trifling a miracle;" he continued, "I can understand that. But they tell me of Lazarus whom you raised from the dead, and that after corruption had begun its work. Yes, this would be a feat worthy of your prowess." The Tetrarch summoned by a look one of his attendants. "Here is Phul, my Egyptian cupbearer; come hither, Longinus. Drive your dagger between this fellow's ribs that we may have a dead man upon whom your Jesus may exercise the utmost cunning of his art. When I nod—strike!"

The Egyptian remained motionless, but terror-stricken. No one moved or seemed to breathe. The Master shook his head and Phul's blood returned to his face. Herod once and again strove to change the Master's attitude; for, as Luke says, "he had heard many things of him [Jesus]; and he hoped to have seen some miracle done by him." But the Master persisted in his refusal, and Herod had recourse to a series of random questions to which Jesus returned no answer. This incited Hananiah to come forward and renew his accusation of sedition; but Herod silenced him curtly, declaring that he would return the prisoner to Pontius Pilate. At the Tetrarch's order a robe of gorgeous brocade, ornamented by arabesques of gold filigree, was brought and thrown about the Master's shoulders. "Take him back to the Procurator," shouted the Tetrarch. "He will know better how to deal with this malcontent. Yes, to my good friend and

brother Pontius Pilate," he ended with a frosty smile. "And the same day," says Luke, "Pilate and Herod were made friends together; for before they were at enmity between themselves."

As the legionaries were reforming in line of march, Xenas, a young Greek under-officer, came to me. "Longinus orders," he whispered, "that you mount his horse and ride at speed to the Procurator; he must decide whether the prisoner is to be taken back to the Governor's palace or to the Prætorium in the Tower of Antonia. Meet us with the answer at the parting of the ways."

At the gallop I made my way to the palace, and was so fortunate as to catch the Procurator just as he was emerging from his long-delayed bath; he looked refreshed and unwontedly amiable. I gave him the complimentary message from Herod and also the verbal request of Longinus for the disposition of the prisoner. Pilate muttered a malediction. "These cursed Jews!" he lamented. "Shall I ever be able to catch up on those lost hours of sleep! However," he added thoughtfully, "it may be wiser to hold this second hearing at the Prætorium where the full strength of the garrison will be available to cope with any trouble. Tell Longinus that I shall arrive at Antonia within half an hour and advise the Tribune of my coming." A wave of his hand and I was dismissed. At the crossways I met the column and delivered the orders.

Directly in front of the fortress ran a terrace paved with huge blocks of sandstone; in the Hebrew it is called Gabbatha. Since the Jews would be unwilling to enter the Prætorium proper or great hall, court must again be held in the open. Presently an ox-cart arrived bearing Pilate's official judgment-chair, together with the square or tessellated Roman pavement on which it ordinarily stood; wherever the Procurator went in the discharge of his magisterial duties, these symbols of the imperial power must accompany him. While we awaited the coming of the Governor, I happened to notice in a far corner an iron cage in which crouched a man so disfigured by grime and dried blood as to be scarcely recognizable as a human being. His clothing was in tatters, and some half-grown boys were poking at the creature with sharp-pointed sticks; he growled at his tormentors as though he were a veritable wild beast. "It is Bar-Abbas, the robber and murderer," explained Xenas as he followed my inquiring gaze. "To-day we are to crucify him, though a thousand deaths would not equal the toll of his crimes."

The full cohort of the Twelth Legion, with Verus at their head, stood in line and under arms; and the spacious esplanade

was already filled with a closely packed crowd of Jews. And now Caiaphas was present in person; he was splendidly attired in a robe of white silk edged with sky-blue fringes and adorned with a double row of silver bells that tinkled with every movement.

A flourish of trumpets and the clash of spearheads upon shields greeted the arrival of the Procurator. The soldiers opened a way for his litter; and Pilate, attended closely by his satellites, took his seat in the judgment-chair. A nod, and a couple of legionaries brought the prisoner to the bar. A brief silence and then the Procurator cleared his throat uncomfortably. "Ye have brought this man unto me," he blurted out, "as one that perverteth the people: and behold, I, having examined him before you, have found no fault in this man touching those things whereof ye accuse him; no, nor yet Herod: for I sent you to him; and, lo, nothing worthy of death is done unto him."

A young man, with an inkhorn suspended from his girdle (indicating that he was a writer in Pilate's retinue), came forward and said something in a low voice to the Governor. Pilate's face lightened at the reminder that it was the custom at the Feast of the Passover to release some notable prisoner. "I will therefore chastise him and release him," concluded the Procu-

rator hesitatingly.

A murmur ran through the assemblage and Hananiah, plucking at the High Priest's sleeve, talked excitedly to him. The Governor smiled and continued: "Whom will ye that I release unto you? Barabbas, or Jesus which is called Christ?"

A messenger pushed through the crowd and approached the judgment-seat; I recognized him as a slave in the personal service of the Lady Claudia. He spoke to the Governor in a low tone, but I was standing so close that I could hear every word. "Have thou nothing to do with that just man," was the message from Claudia, "for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him."

The Procurator flushed, but shook his head stubbornly. "Whether of the twain will ye that I release unto you?" he again demanded.

"Not this man, but Barabbas," answered the multitude with a roar. "Barabbas! Barabbas!" they shouted with an overwhelming accord. "Release unto us Barabbas."

"What then shall I do with Jesus which is called Christ?"

persisted Pilate, but his voice was shaky.

"Let him be crucified!" demanded Hananiah, and again the rabble responded. "Crucify him!" they howled.

"Why, what evil hath he done?" faltered the Governor. But again came that deep-throated clamour: "Let him be crucified!"

At the Procurator's command, a slave brought a bason filled with water; with a dramatic gesture Pilate proceeded to wash his hands. "I am innocent of the blood of this just person," he declared: "see ye to it."

"His blood be on us, and on our children," retorted Hananiah. "So be it," re-echoed the people, and the thunder of their voices was like the sea beating upon a rocky headland.

"On us, and on our children."

And all this time Jesus had said no single word.

Pilate was beaten and he knew it. He nodded and Xenas ran over to the iron cage in which Bar-Abbas crouched; quickly he unlocked the grated door. The prisoner blinked against the strong light and licked his dry lips; so this is the end, was the evident thought in his mind. But Xenas and his legionaries hurried him to where Caiaphas and Hananiah stood. The High Priest drew aside his splendid robes as though fearing contamination from those foul hands. Hananiah, however, welcomed the wretch with an expression of feigned delight. "This is our brother Bar-Abbas," he proclaimed and the multitude bellowed its approbation. One man threw a handsome cloak about his tatters, and another put a wine-flask to his lips. brother Bar-Abbas!" they exulted and the miscreant, at last sensing the incredible good fortune which had befallen him, managed a wide-toothed grin. Then he was swallowed up in the swirl of the crowd.

Verus looked at Pilate, and the Procurator, with an affirmative gesture, indicated that the scourging or intermediate death

might proceed.

The pillar of punishment stood centrally in front of the Prætorium. It was of stone, slightly above the average height of a man, and there was an iron ring at the top through which passed cords, the latter serving to trice up the wrists of the victim. As already noted, Pilate had no lictors and so their instruments of scourging (flexible rods of osier or elm) would not be employed. However, the military form of flogging was even more severe, the *flagellum* being a cruelly effective tool; it consisted of a short wooden handle to which were attached several leather thongs tipped with irregular lumps of metal.

The functionary entrusted with carrying out the disciplinary sentences of the Twelfth Legion had entered with his two assistants and was now awaiting the signal to proceed; he was a short, squat Roman of the lower class as befitting his vocation. He was dressed entirely in black leather.

The assistants removed Herod's brocaded robe from the shoulders of Jesus. They also divested him of the long upper vesture of embroidered linen, and turned down to the waistline the undergarment of wool. It remained only to secure his wrists to the iron ring; now all was in readiness. The wielder of the flagellum drew the thongs through his fingers and measured the distance with a critical eye. Pilate took his ivory wand and rapped sharply on the table. But before the first blow could fall, the Procurator rose and disappeared hastily into the shadow of the arcaded arches of the Prætorium. I liked him just a little better for that.

Swish! and a row of rapidly reddening welts appeared on the white flesh of Jesus. Slash! and another set of stripes were accurately laid on at right angles to the initial strokes; drops of blood oozed at several of the intersections. I took a step forward, but the grip of the Tribune was upon my shoulder and I halted, abjectly conscious that I could do nothing—nothing! The man in black leather raised his arm for a third blow, and I could hear the sucking inbreath of the crowd—the Master's enemies—as the lead-weighted thongs swung upward. Then, with changed mind and altered aim, the lash hissed down decapitating a horsefly that had settled between the shoulder-blades of Jesus; decapitating it so neatly that the tender skin upon which the insect had alighted was not even reddened by the stroke; the mob voiced noisy approval of such artistry.

Stimulated by the applause, the scourger resumed his task, while Hananiah, standing in the forefront, kept audible tally of the blows. Perhaps the Pharisee had in mind the merciful limit ordained by the Mosaic law—forty stripes less one. But already the interruption had come from another quarter; Verus sensing, I daresay, the appeal in my eyes, lifted his hand and the punish-

ment came to a sudden end.

Men have died under the *flagellum*, but Jesus, for all of the apparent delicacy of his physical frame, possessed an essential toughness of fibre. Not only had no cry escaped his lips, but he had preserved perfect consciousness; and when the cords binding his wrists were loosened, he straightened and stood upright as ever. "Here is indeed a man!" muttered Verus as he turned away.

Crowding and shouting, the legionaries urged the Master into the great hall of the Prætorium; by immemorial custom the victim of a scourging was now their plaything and the soldiers lost no time in beginning their sport. "A king, but where are his

mantle and crown and sceptre?" vociferated Xenas.

Herod's fine robe had disappeared, doubtless appropriated by some light-fingered bystander. Whereupon a legionary offered his chlamys or military cloak. It was, through hard wear, somewhat shabby in texture, but still eye-filling with its deep crimson colour. Another caught up some twigs of a resinous spiny bush used to light the great brasier that stood in the middle of the hall and skilfully plaited them into a head-dress—a crown of thorns—while a third produced a stout reed to serve as a sceptre. Nimble fingers stripped Jesus of his own garments and invested him with these counterfeit symbols of royalty. In the same spirit of mockery the soldiers performed their genuflections and saluted him worshipfully, saying: "Hail, King of the Jews!" Several of the rougher element did not hesitate to spit upon him, and one creature, snatching the reed from Jesus' hand, smote him so smartly on the head that the thorns of the crown were driven deeply into the Master's brow and temples. Nathanael Bar-Talmai, stood by and saw it all! But when the fellow raised his weapon for a second stroke, I interposed the keen edge of my spear and the severed reed clattered to the pavement. An angry buzz arose as though a beehive had suddenly been disturbed. What might have happened I cannot say, but the next instant all was silence, for the Procurator had made his reappearance; forcing his way into the ring, Pilate shook aloft his wand of office. "Enough!" he cried and no man ventured to gainsay him in that darksome mood; the crowd gave place and stood at military attention.

"Bring the man forth," continued the Procurator, and the order was quickly obeyed; still wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe, Jesus stood upon the terrace facing the people

-his people.

"Ecce homo!" said Pilate in his native tongue, which is, being interpreted, "Behold the man!"

"Crucify him! Crucify him!" came the immediate answer

from every throat.

Again the Governor sought to temporize. "I find no fault in him," he said; but his voice was barely more than a whisper.

"We have a law," interposed Caiaphas. "And by our law," interrupted Hananiah, "he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God."

Pilate turned, questioning, to Jesus. But the Master kept silence.

"Speakest thou not unto me?" fumed the Procurator.

"Knowest thou not that I have the power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee?"

"Thou couldest have no power at all against me," returned the Master, "except it were given thee from above: therefore

he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin."

Pilate visibly hesitated; he seemed to be summoning sufficient resolution to defy the Jewish oligarchy and do justice. Hananiah sensed the crisis and met it artfully. "If thou let this man go," he cried, "thou art not Cæsar's friend: whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Cæsar."

The Procurator slumped back into the judgment-seat; his face was flushed and he breathed stertorously. "Behold your

King," he quavered.

"Away with him!" was the answering bellow. "Crucify him!"

"Shall I crucify your King?" asked Pilate; a still more feeble evasion.

"We have no king but Cæsar," retorted Caiaphas and Hananiah with one voice; once more the crowd howled its assent.

The ivory wand snapped in two as Pilate twisted it in his agitated hands; he flung the pieces at the feet of Jesus; here was the symbolic presentment of the death sentence. But there was still a formality to be observed. "The accusation," demanded Hananiah.

Pilate seized a gold stylus tipped by a brilliant amethyst, wrote a few words on a wax tablet, and handed it to a writer. Swiftly the scribe, using a brush dipped in crimson colour, transferred the writing to the *titulus*, a small white board which had been prepared for the purpose. Pilate, taking the *titulus*, held it up for all to see; it read: JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS. And it was written in three languages—Hebrew and Greek and Latin—so that all who should pass by the place of punishment might read and understand.

Hananiah raised instant objection. "Write not, The King of the Jews," he demanded; "but that he said, I am King of the

Jews."

But Pilate's small stock of patience was now entirely exhausted. "What I have written," he snapped, "I have written."

The Procurator rose from the judgment-seat. "Ibis ad crucem—Take him to the cross——" he commanded.

The trial of Jesus was ended, sentence had been delivered; from henceforth the words of the scripture were to be fulfilled: "And he was numbered with the transgressors."

Pontius Pilate stumbled to his litter, clambered in, and drew close the curtains. But never again to taste the refreshment of a peaceful night's slumber; henceforth naught but a succession of leaden-footed hours of wakefulness, interrupted only by brief periods of half-conscious visions, the reliving of those dread moments on the judgment-seat when he had been face to face with the Truth, and yet had failed to recognize its radiant essence.

Pilatus, ave atque vale!

Matters moved swiftly. The mock-royal robes were taken off and Jesus was reclothed in his own garments. Verus, deciding that no great show of force was necessary now that the Jews had had their wish and way, ordered Longinus to detail a maniple of sixty legionaries to act as a police guard; of course, I was to be included in the number.

It was part of the *supplicium*, or punishment of the cross, that the victim should himself carry the instrument of his approaching torture. But since the actual cross (*crux immissa*), made of close-grained fir, was far too heavy for the average physique, it was customary to limit the burden to the *patibulum*, or transverse cross-beam; the *staticulum*, or upright member, being sent on ahead to the place of execution.

A trumpet sounded and the maniple formed in line to march. Jesus, bearing the *patibulum*, took his place between the foreand after-guard. Longinus, on horseback, was about to raise his truncheon. The sun, breaking through the clouds with a suddenness characteristic of this changeable spring season, shone

bright and bold and hot.

Like to water pouring out of a broken dam, the crowd in the courtyard ran helter-skelter, seeking to obtain places of vantage along the projected route of the procession. Hananiah headed the race, and at his side reeled Bar-Abbas, the notable prisoner released in honour of the Paschal feast. By this time he was

very drunken.

As the march started I looked back. One solitary form stood at the head of the stairs leading from the now empty esplanade of Antonia to the Temple area—Caiaphas the High Priest. He watched us pass and then himself disappeared—a lonely figure striding down the corridors of time. Yes, and the very loneliest of created beings since Caiaphas had now separated himself eternally from the company of Jesus of Nazareth.

[&]quot;And," so says John, "they led him away."

XXVIII

ALONG THE VIA DOLOROSA

fated to die on this selfsame day: Nathan and Titus by name, both of them robbers and murderers. Verus had ordered that these malefactors should be sent on ahead to the place of punishment, and I watched them as they were led out from the guardhouse—sturdy rogues wearing faded blue garments with hats of plaited straw upon their heads and chains about their necks. Each man bore the transverse beam of the cross upon which he was soon to suffer and they were in charge of a quaternion of legionaries; that is, an executionary squad of four soldiers. Nathan and Titus were shouting maledictions in impotent bravado as they began their last earthly journey, but the onlookers surveyed these ordinary evil-doers with indifference; the great spectacle of the day was still to come.

Quickly the procession was formed. At its head rode Longinus, mounted on a gigantic black battle charger, his face granitic in its impassiveness. Following him marched a herald bearing the *titulus*; from time to time he held it up, turning it from side to side, so that all might be able to read it. Then came a half-maniple of soldiers, my particular position being in the rear rank; and following us walked Jesus, dressed in his own raiment, his back sagging under the heavy balk of fir timber that had been laid upon his shoulders. The second half-maniple of

legionaries formed the after-guard.

Straight before us stretched the narrow thoroughfare which through all the ages was to be known as the Sorrowful Way (Via Dolorosa), a veritable tiger-cat of a street with its alternating bands of thick darkness and dazzling sunlight. Mercifully it was not very long, there being hardly more than a thousand paces between the Tower of Antonia and the Genath or Garden Gate in the north wall of the city. But our progress was slow, since it had to be accommodated to the lagging steps of Jesus exhausted by a sleepless night, the hour of agony in the Garden of Gethsemane, the strain of the several trial hearings, and the tax exacted upon his physical powers by the scourging in the Prætorium and the rough sport of the soldiery.

Now the Sorrowful Way received us. Pressed against the

houses on either hand, the people stood shoulder to shoulder; and from every aperture that commanded the street, curious faces peered. In unbroken silence we marched along. It was also a hostile silence; it seemed as though we were hemmed in, not alone by material brick and stone, but by invisible walls of hate and despite; the very air was so charged with inimical emotion that it became increasingly difficult to catch one's breath. Or so I fancied.

Then came a diversion. At this point the street widened into a tiny market-square and in the middle of this open space a man was capering, the foolish cackle of his laughter rising and falling in rhythm with his awkward antics. It was Bar-Abbas now drunker than ever, and a little way off stood Hananiah re-

garding the unseemly spectacle with a complacent smile.

The brow of Longinus clouded. Drawing his sword from its scabbard, he urged his horse forward and the crowd parted to give him passage. A shrewd blow from the flat of the weapon caught Bar-Abbas between the shoulder-blades, almost knocking the buffoon to the ground. With a yelp Bar-Abbas regained his feet and slipped through a narrow alley between two houses, disappearing as swiftly as a lizard skitters into the crevices of a rock-pile. As the toiling figure of the Master came within the field of vision, Hananiah gazed upon his finished work.

Two paces farther on and the centurion signalled an unexpected halt. It was full time, for Jesus was plainly forespent; he panted and his face was beaded with sweat; now that the sun was out in full strength it was almost unbelievably hot. There was an appealing look in the Master's eyes, for since his hands were bound together he could do nothing to relieve his bodily

distress.

Through the throng pressed a slight feminine form—Lilli habited in her Roman garb. Without an instant's hesitation she plucked the dagger from my girdle and laid its edge against the cords which secured the Master's wrists. And neither voice nor hand were raised against this woman who dared to defy the martial power of Rome and the massed malice of Jewry. Xenas indeed had taken a couple of forward steps, but with a startled exclamation—" The Lady Veronica!"—he halted and made no further effort to interfere.

Lilli handed Jesus the veil which had depended from her head-dress, a square of Damascus linen so fine and sheer that it could have been passed through a woman's finger ring. The Master took it and pressed his streaming brow against the cool, firm surface of the linen; then with his most engaging smile he

returned it to Lilli who dropped a deep curtsey and retreated into the crowd. And my heart sang to think that it was a woman, a woman of my own race and blood, who had been afforded grace to perform this office of affection to the one who had spent his life in ministering to those in trouble, sorrow, need, sickness, or any other adversity. Longinus, from his great warhorse, surveyed the scene in silence; if he could not sympathize, at least he would not condemn. The march was resumed.

A few hundred paces farther on and the contingency which I had foreseen came to pass—the ebbing tide of the Master's strength ceased suddenly to flow; he stumbled and fell, the weight of the *patibulum* crushing him flat upon the uneven pavement of the Sorrowful Way. Forgetting my assumed character, I flung down shield and spear and sprang forward, only to be forestalled by a tall, gaunt rail of a man who had forced his way to the Master's side. With one motion the newcomer flung aside the ponderous weight of the *patibulum*; then, stooping, he assisted Jesus to rise. I looked and recognized Elder Brother James.

Yes, James of the carpenter shop at Nazareth, grim and hard-featured as of yore. But down that rugged face tears were now streaming and as the twain stood in that close embrace I heard him whisper: "Brother, my brother!" And Jesus kissed him. Xenas bustled forward. "No, not you," he cried as James

Xenas bustled forward. "No, not you," he cried as James essayed to pick up the offending cross-beam. "Fetch hither that stout fellow in the green smock; he shall bear the cross for the Nazarene." With a lingering look at Jesus, Elder Brother James melted back into the press. But he had made his eternal peace with the Master.

A ruddy-faced countryman came forward. Veritable pillars were his legs and his burly back bore easily the weight placed upon it. Simon of Cyrene was his name, and Mark tells us that he was the father of Alexander and Rufus. These latter are but names to me, but the Cyrenian himself achieves the high honour of being chosen out of all the world to share with Jesus the burden of the Accursed Tree.* Again Longinus has said no word, and the procession is moving on.

Everywhere a sea of faces, for now it was hard upon high

^{*}There is a tradition that when Elder Brother James stooped to lift the heavy cross-beam (patibulum) from the shoulders of the fallen Jesus he recognized that particular piece of wood, having the eye of a master-craftsman for any bit of work that had once passed through his hands. It was the selfsame beam which years before had been spoiled in the making at the carpenter shop in Nazareth; James himself having made a mistake in the sawing, it was now too short by a span. What could be done,

noon and the city was thronged with Passover pilgrims all agog for what they might see and hear; moreover, the noise of what had happened was now common property. Yet I recognized no one; not a single member of the Apostolic group was in evidence, excepting myself. But I can claim no title to heroism, since it was the friendship of Verus which had given me this position under the ægis of the Roman eagles, and I still carried my full share of the cowardice shown at Gethsemane when we had all forsaken him and fled. But in the open space before the gate, there was assembled a company of women; among them Joanna, Salome the mother of Zebedee's children, and Lilli. In the background stood Mary, mother of the Master. She was dressed in a white woolen robe with a blue over-mantle and her veil was vellowish-white in colour. I could see that she leaned heavily on the arm of her sister, Mary, wife of Cleophas (the latter not to be confounded with Cleopas, more familiarly known to us as James Minor). And Luke tells us that these women "bewailed and lamented him." Yes, in all that throng of onlookers—the idly curious, the stolidly indifferent, the actively malignant—there remained only this little group of women who were not afraid to show their pity or to manifest their love for him who was now going forth to die. A proud distinction indeed, and it was in response to the tears of these women that the Master spoke the sole recorded words uttered by him during the passage of the Sorrowful Way: "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For, behold, the days are coming in which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the womb which never bare, and the paps which never gave suck." Clearly and loudly the prophecy rang out and the mother of Jesus shrank back as she listened; it was

for this was a matter of haste and there was no other suitable piece of fir in the shop? Whereupon Jesus had put His hand to the end of the timber, and when He took it away the beam had grown to the exact length required. Judas had related the story to me on the day that we rode together from Nazareth to Nain, and I had scoffed at it as an idle wonder tale. Moreover, it is truly asserted that the Master never used His supernatural powers for personal or trivial ends; did He not refuse to turn stones into bread when He was an-hungered in the wilderness?

And yet there may be a modicum of truth in the legend. Every conscious act of the Master's life had been planned in preparation for His great mission—His Father's business. In this particular instance, the

great mission—His Father's business. In this particular instance, the present need had been urgent and Jesus had supplied it. But once the immediate necessity had passed, this material piece of wood could never again be returned to common uses. It had received the life-giving touch from the Master's own hands; from henceforth it must remain a thing set apart, consecrated against the time when Jesus must suffer under Pontius Pilate—the Sacrament of the True Cross.

the first prick of the sword which was soon to pierce her very heart.

A high, thin, inhuman sound—the scream of a man in pain. Quickly it was followed by another shriek, and it became apparent that the two thieves, Nathan and Titus, had begun the expiation of their innumerable crimes. Then silence again, and the stillness seemed even harder to bear than that brief period of agony in utterance. Through the gateway the march proceeded.

A short distance beyond the Gate Genath the two great roads to the north intersect—the one on the left running to Acre and the Great Sea, the one on the right to Damascus. Moreover, a hundred paces to the east rose a little naked hill, rounded like a skull and with several curiously shaped fissures in the limestone rock that bore out the fancied resemblance to a human head denuded of its fleshly integument—Golgotha, the place of a skull, and the scene of all public executions. For it was with-

out the city wall.

Upon the summit of Golgotha two low crosses were in position, each bearing its victim, a man naked except for a loin cloth. But only an half-audible moaning came from the lips of these wretches, and I understood that they had been given the vinum languidam, or wine of heaviness, a decoction charged with narcotic drugs such as laudanum, myrrh, saffron, and resin, which was provided at all executions by a society of noblyborn, charitably-minded women of Jerusalem. The anodyne had the effect of deadening the pain-centres, and naturally it was eagerly accepted by the condemned men; now that all hope was gone, oblivion was the only possible grace.

Between the crosses already set up there was a space for a third one. The staticulum, or upright portion, lay on the ground and the patibulum, or cross-beam, borne by Simon of Cyrene, was quickly fitted into place; the mortices having been prepared beforehand, it was necessary only to make the joining secure by driving in a couple of stout spikes. The four executioners hastily divested Jesus of his clothing and stretched him prone on the cross. One of the soldiers produced a handful of triangular-shaped nails, a second legionary grasped a heavy

hammer. I turned my eyes away.

The Master's body was now firmly attached to the cross, the hands being fixed at the extremities of the transverse beam and the feet, one above the other, nailed to the upright member by a single spike. It remained to put in position the cornu, or horn, a wooden shelf three-cornered in shape, which was intended to take most of the weight; otherwise the body would soon have torn loose from its comparatively inadequate supports. Last of

all, the titulus was affixed, just above the head of Jesus.

The four soldiers, brawny fellows, swung the laden cross upright, and proceeded to guide the butt-end into a square cavity that had been previously cut in the rock. Ordinarily the process would have been accomplished with smoothness and celerity, but this time a mishap occurred. One man stumbled and jostled his neighbour who in turn lost his hand-grip. The two other legionaries were unable to cope with the extra burden thrown upon them, and the foot-post found its socket with a jar that communicated itself to every atom of my own physical being; an overwhelming faintness seized me.

When the mists cleared away, I saw that the soldiers were completing their work by tamping earth and stones around the base of the cross; it was now firmly fixed in position. Jesus had uttered no cry when the terrific shock came, but every vestige of colour had drained away from his face and convulsive shivers

were running through his entire body.

A young man, whose office it was to administer the "cup of heaviness," ran forward. Now all the crosses were set so low that the feet of the sufferers were but two or three handbreadths above the ground; therefore he found no difficulty in presenting the cup to the Master's lips. But when Jesus sensed the intoxicating nature of the proffered potion, he turned his head away in token of refusal. The young man hesitated; then realizing that the greedy eyes of the two thieves were fixed upon him, he turned and divided the "cup of passing" between them; they

drank and relapsed into their former stupor.

The legionaries had been allowed to break ranks and were now taking their ease a short distance away. But Longinus remained sitting bolt upright in his saddle. Since it was too early in the season for the plague of flies, the horse, trained to play his part, stood motionless; rider and steed together presented the veritable appearance of an equestrian statue, the visible embodiment of the imperial power—impassive, impersonal, colossal. Under his glittering casque with its sweeping horsehair plume, the eyes of the Roman centurion gazed fixedly at the distant, violet-tinted sky-line of the Moabitish hills; it seemed as though they saw nothing and yet saw everything; should any emergency arise Longinus would be ready to meet it. But all was quiet on Golgotha, and a thick, reddish fog was beginning to temper the rays of the sun.

But now came a diversion. Close by stood a group of ecclesiastics among whom the towering figure of Hananiah was conspicuous. To them indeed it was the hour of triumph over a dangerous but now discomfited enemy of Jewry; at last this troublesome young rabbi of Nazareth was paying the penalty of rebellion against the duly constituted powers of Synagogue and State. In twos and threes the scribes and elders and priests of the ruling Sadducean party surged forward to the very foot of that central cross, wagging their heads and muttering their mockeries of him who hung thereon. "Ah, thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, * * * come down from the cross."

Now the voice of Hananiah rose clear above the tumult. "He saved others," he cried; "himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him. He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God." In one tremendous chorus, to which the two thieves added their painhoarsened voices, came the response: "He saved others; himself he cannot save."

Jesus was speaking. Instantly every tongue was mute, every ear alert; what was he saying? Low but distinct came the words: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

To my overwrought fancy Jesus kept his eyes fixed on just one man among that great multitude—Hananiah; yes, the Master was speaking to him alone. The priestly party must have sensed this distinction, for almost imperceptibly it melted back into the fringe of casual spectators. And Hananiah must have known it as he stood solitary under the august gaze.

"They know not what they do." What an astounding qualification! Yet, later on, Paul, Apostle to the Gentiles, was to add his confirmation to that amazing utterance as when he says: "Brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it; for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory."

Well, if they did not know, why should there be any occasion for forgiveness? But is it not true that in all sin there is both an ignorance and an understanding? Pontius Pilate was not aware of the true mission of the Master of Israel, but he did know that he was condemning the accused without sufficient cause; does he not take water and wash his hands before the multitude, saying: "I am innocent of the blood of this just person; see ye to it." The High Priest, the ecclesiastics, the scribes, and the elders had failed to comprehend that in crucifying Jesus they were seeking to blot out from the firmament the Dayspring

from on High, but they did know that it was for envy that they had arraigned him before the Roman court. Hananiah himself was ignorant of the full measure of grace that was in Jesus of Nazareth, but he did know that he was choosing the evil rather than the good when he led the shout: "Away with this man, and release unto us Barabbas!"

For a moment or two Hananiah strove to hold his ground, and the words of the prophet Zechariah came into my mind: "They shall look upon him whom they have pierced."

Incarnate hate at last face to face with incarnate Love; which of these two elemental forces would prove the stronger

now that the issue was finally joined?

Desperately Hananiah tried to rally his forces; then something broke in that ponderous bulk like to the snapping of a twig in a faggot of dry sticks; his head fell upon his breast; little by little he sagged downward until now he was on his knees at the base of that central cross; his lips seemed to be pressed upon those bleeding feet.

Hananiah had risen and now his gaze travelled slowly upward to the countenance of Jesus; for an instant the eyes of the two men met, mingled, and then drew apart. Hananiah turned, shouldered his way through the press and disappeared in the

gathering mists.*

*I never again saw Hananiah Ben-Hamel, but, years later, when I chanced to be travelling across the wilderness of Edom in trans-Jordania I was told of an holy man who had lived for a long time in that black, boulder-strewn desert—the abomination of desolation with its ghostly "high places" once sacred to the worship of Baal, its towering pinnacles and its fathomless fissures, all eroded in the incredible rose-coloured cliffs by the teeth of the never-ending winds. The hermit was described to me as a man of gigantic stature. He inhabited a cave and his only sustenance consisted of locusts, the pods of the carob bean, and such-like desert provender. He was never known to exchange a word with his infrequent neighbours, either man or woman; but he smiled at children, and some of the little ones even visited him, on occasion, in his lonely abode; they agreed in saying that the furnishment of the cavern was made up of two or three tattered camel's-skins, a few bottle-gourds, a three-legged stool, and a couch composed of a thorny desert scrub, the latter carefully arranged in the form of a Latin cross. Hardly a bed of ease, but it had to serve for the scanty periods of sleep which the saint allowed himself out of his long hours of meditation and orisons. Certain it is that when he had not been seen or heard of for several months, a searching party found him lying dead upon his cross, his body already mummified by the dry and baking desert air. And there he still lies, for the entrance to the cave was blocked a few days later by an immense rock slide. Was this holy man of the Edomite wilderness really Hananiah Ben-Hamel? I like to think so. He had been a man of a rough tongue and of a heavy hand. But he found his peace at the foot of Jesus' cross, and could there be a better place than the immemorial desert in which to cherish the remembrance of that marvellous reconcilement, of that wonderful release?

Let me again stress the confused state of my mind as I stood an eye-witness of the drama of Golgotha. This was Jesus of Nazareth whom I had followed solely from the affection which I bore him. But the trial before Caiaphas had introduced a new and perplexing element into the case. For the High Priest, unable to prove anything against the Master by means of his contradictory witnesses, had been forced to employ the "Oath of Testimony"; he had turned suddenly on Jesus, saying: "I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God." Jesus had answered: "Thou hast said," and it was upon this virtual admission of the point at issue that Caiaphas had continued: "He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? * * * What think ye?" And with one voice the counsellors had replied: "He is guilty of death."

Yes, it was for blasphemy—"because he made himself the Son of God," as our brother John puts it—that the Master was now paying the capital penalty, the insinuation that Jesus was seeking to make himself a king in opposition to Cæsar being

only a flimsy pretext to force the Procurator's hand.

What once more is my own position in the matter? Hitherto, in my inherited and acquired scepticism, I had consistently minimized the supra-normal element in the Master's deeds and teachings. But my incredulity had been slowly breaking down under the weight of the mighty works, culminating in the raising of Lazarus from the dead. And now I must face the full conclusion implicit in the premises and logically proceeding from them. Is this Jesus, our Master and Elder Brother, indeed the Chrestos, the Anointed One, the Alpha and Omega which was and which is and which is to come, the Son of the Highest?

After long hesitation and halting between two opinions, I have now arrived at the point where I can affirm with Simon Peter that Jesus is indeed the Christ, the Son of the living God. And herewith I do affirm it. But with one single and all-important reservation: Jesus must himself justify to the uttermost the faith that is in me. I have trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel; and surely, ah, surely, Jesus will not make me ashamed. I have spoken.

XXIX

"IT IS FINISHED"

OW occurs an hiatus in my personal narrative. I had been watching the four soldiers of the executionary squad who were squatting on the ground a short distance away and disputing over the articles of clothing belonging to Jesus which were now their perquisites. One of these men, a Levantine to judge by his appearance, proved himself a shrewd trader; with the aid of a few copper coins he had become the owner of everything except the beautiful coat of fine linen woven in one piece. It could not be divided without destroying its value and the soldiers were gambling for its possession, using for the purpose the astragaloi, or small huckle-bones from a deer's ankle-joints, which every legionary carried by way of dice in his marching kit. Even as I stood there, the Levantine triumphantly exclaimed: "I have thrown a Venus!" that being the highest number that could be secured by a player; consequently the seamless robe had also passed into his possession. my opportunity, since, by good fortune, I happened to have in the doeskin pouch depending from my girdle a couple of Alexandrian gold staters. It was too good a bargain to be resisted, and presently all the garments were mine by fee-purchase. had just finished packing the various articles in a compact bundle and was about to straighten up from my constrained kneeling position, when suddenly I fell into a pit of darkness.

It must have been the better part of an hour before I recovered consciousness. The lack of sleep and food, the strain of the court proceedings, the drama of the march to Golgotha, and finally the atrocious spectacle of the crucifixion—all these had taken their toll of my physical resources, and, for the first time in my life, I fainted clean away. No one, of course, had seen fit to render me any assistance and it was Nature herself, in her own good time, who had finally restored me to conscious existence. Fortunately my recently acquired purchases were under my body when I fell, and, since nobody had noticed the little

packet, it was still safe.

It was during this lapse that the Master held his brief colloquy with the two malefactors who had been crucified with

him—Titus and Nathan, hereafter to be eternally distinguished as the Impenitent and the Penitent Thief. Moreover, it was in this interval that Jesus had committed his Virgin Mother to the care of John the Beloved Disciple. Now the story of the Second Word from the cross is related by our brother Luke, while John naturally records the Third Word; since I did not hear them with my own ears, I need not set them down here.

Before my fainting fit, the weather had been inclined to mistiness with occasional drops of rain. Now, with the advent of the sixth hour or high noon, another and more portentous change was impending. The fog had lifted, but the disk of the sun was of an orange tint and it was surrounded by a fiery-bright ring, copper in colour. Down on the horizon rim to the westward lay a bank of intense blackness, and from it vapours streamed continuously to the zenith until the full arch of the sky was covered as though by a pall. Ordinarily the darker the night, the brighter shine the stars, but now no constellations were visible and the rays from even the largest of the planets were unable to pierce the all-pervading gloom; in the words of Luke: "There was a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour."

On Golgotha a great silence had fallen. The lips of the scoffers had ceased from their mockeries, the groups of casual onlookers were melting noiselessly away, and even the rough-hewn legionaries had given over their trivial chatter and were gazing uneasily at the steadily darkening sky. Afar off stood mute and motionless a company of women among whom Mark records the presence of "Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the less and of Joses, and Salome; (who also, when he was in Galilee, followed him, and ministered unto him:) and many other women which came up with him unto Jerusalem." Ah, what a record of loyalty and love! Would that we men could show the like in this the darkest hour!

In the foreground Longinus still sat upon his war-horse, sombrely expectant of an emergency which was never to arrive. For the malefactors—Titus the Impenitent and Nathan the Penitent Thief—had relapsed into the final coma and hung immobile upon their respective crosses of burning pain; Jesus himself had given sign neither of speech nor of movement for a long time. But in the little light that remained I could see that his eyes, while still open, remained vacant and lustreless; yes, he too had journeyed into that far country of which Job speaks: "A land of darkness, as darkness itself; and of the shadow of death, without any order, and where the light is as darkness."

No bird flies in the shadowed sky, no wolf howls along the far Judæan plain, no satyr cries to his fellow on the dark mountains of Sinai, no leaf stirs in the silver-grey groves of the Mount of Olives, no footfall echoes on the flinty floor of Golgotha.

It is the darkest hour.

The Fourth Word from the cross. And Jesus said: "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? Which is being interpreted, My God,

my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

Like hammer blows these words smote upon my heart. Can it be possible that Jesus is not only a deceiver of us who had trusted in him but also a self-deceiver? Is this the utterance of a Messiah, a Conqueror, the Son of the living God? Is it not rather the cry of Isaiah's Suffering Servant, "smitten of God and afflicted, despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, with no beauty that we should desire him"? Yes, and more, is not this he upon whom "the Lord hath laid the iniquity of us all, whose soul hath been made an offering for sin"?

An offering for sin. But how can this be predicated of Jesus

in whom even Pontius Pilate could find no fault?

And then suddenly I seemed to see at least a little ways into the heart of this mystery. He who knew no sin had yet shown himself willing to know what sin is, all that it really is. And since the Almighty can hold no manner of converse with that supreme unrighteousness which comes of the full knowledge of sin, the penalty can be none other than this complete, if not eternal, separation from God. "Behold, and see," says the prophet Jeremiah, "if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow."

Jesus hangs upon the cross, not only cut off from every semblance of companionship with his human kind, but also deprived of every token of his divine relationship, the light of the Father's countenance eclipsed by a thick curtain of impenetrable darkness. All this that the scriptures might be fulfilled: "I have trodden the wine-press alone; and of the people there was none with me."

Uncounted ages have passed away. But now a feeble radiance appears upon the lower edge of that thick curtain; almost imperceptible at first, it rapidly grows until like magic the pall lifts; a ray from the sun's effulgent orb strikes full upon that central cross, and turns the chaplet of thorns into a crown of glory.

The face of Jesus is pale but calm. As the heat of the sun falls upon it, his lips are once more moving, and I catch the almost inaudible murmur: "I thirst." It is the Fifth Word.

A legionary also hears, and, stirred by an unwonted compassion, he dips a sponge into a vessel of sour wine and fixes it upon a reed. I take the reed from his unresisting hand and place the dripping sponge at Jesus' mouth; he drinks and turns his head away with the merest wisp of a smile upon his twisted lips. I think that he knew me and was glad to accept this last office of love from my hands.

But how strange that he who holds the waters in the hollow

of his hand should thirst!

The Sixth Word: "It is finished."

What is finished? His mission among men, his marvellous words and mighty works, his hour of humiliation with its rejection and condemnation, his suffering even unto the very gates of death—yes, I can understand that all these things must be accomplished. But life, that life which he himself proclaimed to be the light of the world; surely that could not be finished. Now indeed will my single reservation be met by Jesus; he must justify the newborn faith that is in me. And I know and believe that he will do so; he has only to pray his Father, and presently more than twelve legions of angels—

Now the sun is darkenéd Rent the Seamless Veil, Now the graves give up their dead Hearts for terror fail. Quakes the earth; a last star shines, Low and minishéd. See, his thorn-crowned head inclines! It is finishéd.

The Seventh Word. A loud voice, pealing like the last trump to the very ends of the earth: "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit."

And he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.

Once more a menacing change in this capricious spring day—the firmament is covered by clouds of sulphurous yellow through which the orb of the sun smoulders like a dying coal of

fire. No wind is stirring, but doors and windows in near-by houses are shaking and rattling as though in a storm; from the city comes an undertone of wailing. The solid earth trembles. Men lose their balance and are flung violently to the ground; or they stagger wildly about, seeking to maintain their footing. A narrow but unfathomably deep chasm appears in the rock of Golgotha between the cross of Jesus and that of Titus the Impenitent Thief.

An earthquake then, but I reck nothing of the physical phenomena; what does all this matter when compared with the ruin of my spiritual universe? For now indeed are the foundations of the great deep broken up, and the soul is melted because of

trouble.

It being the preparation of the Sabbath, the Jews had besought Pilate that the ancient injunction should be observed as recorded in the book of Deuteronomy: "If a man have committed a sin worthy of death, * * * and thou shall hang him on a tree; his body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but thou shalt in any wise bury him that day; (for he that is hanged is accursed of God;) that the land be not defiled." Pilate had given his assent and this involved the employment of the crurifragium, or the breaking of the legs of the condemned by means of a heavy bar of iron. Longinus accordingly issued the order, and the "stroke of mercy" had been administered to the two thieves who had been crucified with Jesus. But, as John relates: "When they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs; but one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water." The tragedy of Calvary had been consummated: Tesus is dead.

Jesus is dead. But this could mean only that he had failed us who had trusted in him; yes, and his last conscious act had been to destroy that faith which so short a time before I had been able to affirm; my single reservation—that he should

justify himself-had not been met.

Is this too harsh a judgment? Had not the Master forewarned us of what must shortly come to pass? Says Luke: "Then he took unto him the twelve, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished. For he shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, * * * and they shall put him to death."

Yes, Jesus had spoken these very words; why then should I cavil at what had happened? Ah, but it had not happened as the Master had foretold; the Gentiles had not put him to death.

Do you require proof of this assertion? Remember that Jesus had hanged but a scant three hours upon the cross, and his wounds were in no wise mortal. His bodily strength scarce abated, his consciousness undulled, his faculties still alert—at any moment he could have willed to descend from the cross and resume his place among living men. But what did he do?

"He bowed his head, and gave up the ghost."

Have you ever seen a man die? If so, you will know that a person in extremis invariably raises his head, or at least attempts to do so—a last effort to breathe in the life-sustaining air. Not until after this final effort does the heart cease to beat; then and then only does the head fall upon the breast. But Jesus bowed his head before he died, a conscious gesture of surrender. In the full exercise of his faculties, with a deliberate measure of resolution, Jesus had willed to pass finally and forever into the grey world, unpeopled save by wandering figures and indeterminate shapes where all things are forgotten, the land of the shadow of death.

The Master had called forth Lazarus from the tomb by the exercise of an irresistible puissance against which even the galltipped sword of Azrael, the Death Angel, could not avail. Under the spell of that mighty prodigy, my own doubts and questionings had begun to vanish, the hard shell of my unbelief had been splintered, and I found myself ready to acclaim Jesus of Nazareth as very God of very God, the veritable Son of the Highest.

But now the Master is no more, and the resurrection power must have perished with him. Truly Jesus had recalled Lazarus to the world of living men, but who is there to restore the life which Iesus himself has laid down? Naught remains but the grave, a sepulchre in which is buried not alone the Master whom I had loved and followed, but also my new-born faith in him

whom I had trusted; it is the end of all things.*

The centurion was speaking; the only consecutive sentence

^{*}Be it understood that at this particular time I was unfamiliar with a significant pronouncement made by the Master upon this transcendent issue, a pronouncement afterwards to be recorded in the Gospel according to John. For Jesus said: "I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." Yet had I known, would I have understood-or believed?

"Truly," he exclaimed, "truly which I ever heard from his lips.

this man was the Son of God."

I looked coldly at Longinus. "Jesus is dead," I said. And forthwith I turned on my heel and departed from Golgotha— Golgotha the place of a skull.

XXX

THE DARK ZONE OF A HUMAN SOUL

TONGINUS, knowing the temporary nature of my enrollment in the Twelfth Legion, had offered no opposition to my unceremonious departure; for, now that the execution had been carried out, the centurion would lead his troops back to Antonia at once and my services, such as they were, would be required no longer.

For a few moments I stood looking back upon the scene. The cadavers of Titus and Nathan had been removed, and I overheard Xenas say that they would be taken to a near-by marsh and there buried head downward, the utmost gesture of despite and contumely. But what of the body of the Master which still remained suspended from the central cross?

I started forward, but with no clearly defined purpose in Then I noticed a little company of my fellow-countrymen approaching from the city. It was headed by two elderly men dressed alike in sad-coloured mantles with black sleeves, and overcloaks of grey wool-my uncle Joseph of Arimathæa With them came a number of attendants and Nicodemus. carrying pole-ladders furnished with iron hooks, vessels containing the ceremonial burial requisites of perfumed water and oil, sponges, a supply of spices (myrrh and aloes) in bark bottles, and a large winding-sheet bound with leathern straps. the military took no steps to interfere, I came to the conclusion that Joseph had obtained official sanction from the Procurator for the disposition of the Master's corse; and that I was right in this conjecture is shown by the records of all four of the Evangelists. I was glad that my uncle had made so bold, for Joseph was indeed a good man and a just man, and he had not assented to the condemnation by the High Priest and the Great Council. Nicodemus also had been a disciple of Jesus, albeit in secret, for it was he who had come to the Master by night. While Nicodemus, for fear of the Jews, had never been willing, openly and wholeheartedly, to espouse the Master's cause, yet he loved Jesus, and now he had come in person to offer the final tribute; of this too I could be glad.

I watched as the body of Jesus was lowered to the ground, wrapped in the sheet, and carried away on a litter. Later on, I could acquaint myself with the circumstances of the entombment, but I must first get rid of my Roman military dress and accoutrements; then, glancing down, I realized that I was still holding the vesture which had belonged to the Master, his one and only earthly possession. Well, on my way back to the castle I could stop at my uncle's house and there deposit the precious memorabilia.

It was Lilli, now attired as a Jewish maiden, who opened the door in response to my repeated knockings. She started in affright at my appearance in the habiliments of a Roman legionary; the casque with its flowing plumes shadowing a grim and clean-shaven face. Then she recognized me. "Nathanael!" she exclaimed and stood aside to give me entrance. Her eyes were red-rimmed as though from a sleepless vigil and her slight

shoulders sagged. "It is over-all over?" she asked.

"Yes," I answered dully. "Jesus is dead."
Lilli led the way into the great hall of the mansion, and I gave into her hands the little bundle of linen; she took and held it reverently.

"Father went to the Procurator an hour ago," she continued,

"to see about the burial of the Master; he is still absent."

"I know. I saw him just now at Golgotha. Jesus has been taken down from the cross, and he will be buried ----"

"In a garden near by which belongs to my father," interrupted Lilli. "There is a new tomb there, hewn out of the rock, wherein never man before was laid."

"It is well."

I turned to go, but Lilli laid her hand upon my arm, a touch as light as that of a wind-drawn feather. I shook it off impatiently. "Nathanael!" she pleaded, and her voice was low and sweet, like to the rustling of the summer wind among the wheat.

"What more is there to say?" I retorted harshly. trusted that it had been he who should have redeemed Israel.

But Jesus is dead; he is dead."

Lilli drew back and I left the house without another word. What room could there be in my hot and bitter heart for the touch of a woman's hand, for soft words from a woman's lips? Only one certainty existed in all the world—Jesus is dead,

Lucius Verus was absent from his quarters when I reached the fortress and for this I was not sorry. Quickly I doffed my legionary dress and resumed my own garments. Again I took

to the open, caring little whither I went.

Although it still lacked an hour of sunset, the thoroughfares seemed singularly clear of people. Then I remembered that the Paschal feast was about to begin, and doubtless the various households were now assembling behind closed doors for the great national commemoration.

Turning a corner where two narrow streets crossed, I encountered James Minor. As though by mutual consent, neither of us exchanged a word concerning the central tragedy of the day. But James was full of the surprising events connected with the recent earthquake. It appeared that the columns in the Temple supporting the Veil that separated the Holy Place from the Holiest of Holies had been shaken down, the Veil itself being rent from top to bottom. In consternation, the priests and Levites had striven to repair the damage before the bruit of it became public property, but their efforts had been fruitless. The heavy draperies could not be made to stay in place and the Temple servitors, working with trembling hands and averted faces, had refused finally to continue the hopeless task.

James went on to tell of other strange manifestations of the physical disturbance; how the rocks had rended and the sepulchres had opened and the bodies of long-buried saints had appeared in the city streets. Several credible witnesses had deposed of seeing the apparitions of the Prophet Jeremiah and of the High Priest Zecharias. "And I myself," concluded James, "will take oath that I recognized the two sons of Simon the Just who were killed in the falling of the Tower of Siloam." I nodded an indifferent assent; of what importance were these minor prodigies? And below James's voluble chatter there were the undertones of a great grief. But neither of us could speak of what was uppermost in our minds; still less could we venture upon that terrible silence in which all things secret are revealed. We walked on slowly.

"There is another matter," continued my companion, "and perhaps you can advise me. It concerns Judas; I mean, of

course, the Iscariot.

"I saw him this morning, about the third hour, walking slowly across the stone bridge which spans the valley of the Cheesemakers. Ever and anon he stopped and gazed distractedly at the leather bag that he carried, and his appearance was so distraught that I could do no less than keep him in view; I feared that he might be contemplating some act of desperation.

"For, astonishing as it may seem, Judas had shown me many

little kindnesses in the past that no one knew about. Several times he had offered the assistance of his arm in getting over bad places; he did it roughly as was his wont, but still he did it. And this I could not forget. Therefore I followed, intent on

keeping him in sight.

"Finally he seemed to have made up his mind, and he went straight to the Temple where the sacrifice of the Paschal lambs was in progress, despite the portent of the rended Veil. Passing rapidly through the outer courts, he came to the barrier shutting off the Sanctuary. Judas had no legal right to enter there, but he recked nothing of the prohibition; thrusting ahead, he forced his way to the Altar of Burnt-offerings where the elders and priests were assembled. Caiaphas and Hananiah were not present, but in a corner sat Annas.

"With a wild gesture, Judas dashed down the bag that was still in his hand. 'I have sinned,' he cried, 'in that I have betrayed the innocent blood.' The thong broke and a number of silver pieces rolled in every direction upon the pavement.

"A short silence and then the voice of Annas became audible.

'What is that to us?' it said, 'see thou to that.'

"Judas stood irresolute, but he made no effort to retrieve his treasure. Presently several of the younger priests picked up the coins and restored them to the bag which they presented to Annas. But Annas protested: 'It is not lawful for to put them into the treasury, because it is the price of blood. Let the silver be used to purchase a potter's field in which the bodies of strangers and of paupers may be buried.' So it was decreed.

"Judas walked away with lowered head and recrossed the Tyrophœon, apparently in aimless agitation of mind. I followed

him to this very street; he is here now."

"Where?"

James Minor led me to a kennel between two mean houses; and there, half-submerged in the discoloured water that trickled down the gutter, lay the body of the man from Kerioth. I bent over him. His eyes were open, but they held no hint of recognition; they were of a peculiar glassiness, and the skin of his face and hands was cold to the touch; plainly Judas was very ill and must be found an immediate shelter.

Grudgingly—I use the word advisedly, for my heart was still hot with the memory of the betrayal—I decided that I must do something in the matter; otherwise the man would die where he lay. It had been a treachery whose culmination was that basest of actions, the kiss of a false friend. And yet I knew, I alone of all the world, that Judas had played his detestable part under

the domination of an alien power: "Satan had entered into him."

Once again I wavered; how could I condone his treachery, the worst of fleshly crimes? how could I ever bear to touch this—this creature! And then I recalled in what manner the Master had addressed Judas, even after that abominable kiss. "Friend," said Jesus, "wherefore art thou come?" Yes, the Master had called him "Friend."

"Lend me a hand," I said to James who complied to the best of his poor ability. Together we managed to get Judas on his feet, together we supported him on the comparatively short journey to the house of Joseph of Arimathæa.

I knew that in my uncle's garden stood a pavilion or garden house which at this season of the year was not in use; here at least was a shelter. Lilli gave me the key. "There is no means of making a fire," she reminded me, "but I will send over an armful of rugs, and there are couches in both the rooms. Also I will give you food."

"Just water and milk, and some bread," I insisted. "Noth-

ing more I beg of you."

Presently the coverings arrived, together with the supply of simple provisions, to which, however, Lilli had added on her own account half a goat's cheese and a huge cluster of dates.

I took Judas into the inner room and tried to get him to lie down upon the pallet. He voicelessly refused, and I had to content myself with throwing a heavy robe about his shoulders as he sat bolt upright on the couch. I placed a gourd of water and several wheat cakes on a near-by stool, while he continued to stare steadily out of a window at the few twinkling lights which alone betokened the near proximity of a great city. And there I left him.

James Minor had it in mind to seek lodgings with friends at Bethany, and he suggested that I should accompany him. But I refused, and, immediately after his departure, I threw myself upon a pallet, and pulled a rug over me; instantly I fell into a profound slumber.

It was high noon when I awoke, for the strain and strife of yesterday had brought me to the point of complete physical exhaustion. The sleep had refreshed my body, but with the return of consciousness came also the full realization of all that happened; amidst the torrent of painful recollections one certainly stood out like a great rock above the flood—Jesus was dead and with him had died a very beautiful dream.

Quickly I broke my fast and then went, reluctantly, into the inner room.

Judas was sitting in precisely the same position in which I had left him. I spoke to him, but he answered never a word. Apparently the food had not been touched. I brought in a jug of milk and a handful of dates. Still he neither stirred nor looked at me. I could understand; I knew that all the devils

in hell were tearing at his soul. Again I left him.

The day was dark, for an intermittent drizzle fell from the low-lying clouds. Once outside the pavilion, I hastened to leave the garden, being unwilling to hold converse with Lilli or indeed any member of my uncle's household. But no one intruded on my bitter mood, and presently I was threading my way through a maze of back streets to the Gate Genath on the north wall. Only a few people were abroad; the ordinary bustle and traffic of the town were strangely absent; Jerusalem seemed a veritable city of the dead. And then I remembered that this was the Sabbath day and also the beginning of the Passover week.

Outside the gate I forced myself to cast a glance at Golgotha. The rocks gleamed bare and wet and cold; "the place of a skull" was deserted save for its memories; now it was blotted out altogether by gusts of heavy rain, and for this I was glad. I walked on rapidly over the short and sodden grass which

bordered the highway.

Although I had never been there before, I had no difficulty in finding the enclosed garden belonging to my uncle Joseph, a small plot of ground some eighty paces in both directions. It was well wooded—cedar trees and oaks—and there were thickets of rose-of-Sharon and of that shrub, all aflame with pink blossoms, which in after time was to be known as the Judas tree.

In the middle of the garden there was an outcrop of white rock, resembling marble in texture, and intersected by red and blue veins. The door of the rock-hewn tomb faced to the east and it was closed by a round, flat disk of stone which rested in a groove, so that it could be rolled away by a moderate exercise of man-power. In the shallow forecourt was a ledge upon which, probably, the body of Jesus had been laid while being prepared for interment; I noticed a shred or two of linen cloth and a few scattered grains of aloes. On the morrow, doubtless, the women would supplement these hasty funeral rites with precious oils for anointing and fresh spices for the ceremonial embalming. It would have to be on the morrow, for this Passover-Sabbath was holy in a double sense and no work of any sort could be done.

There had been no one to offer opposition to my entrance and

the garden had seemed entirely deserted. But now I heard the

voices of men speaking in the Latin tongue.

A few paces away and hidden by heavy shrubbery I discovered a temporary encampment of soldiers, a double quaternion in number. There could be no adequate shelter against the downpour, and so the legionaries, wrapped in their thick military cloaks, crouched stolidly over a brasier. Xenas was in command of the party. Recognizing me in spite of my change of raiment, he rose and came forward, greeting me with rough amiability.

"But why the guard?" I asked.

"There is no satisfying you Jews," retorted Xenas as he shook off the globules of water collected on the greasy felt of his woolen cape. "Late this afternoon a delegation of your chief priests came to the Governor with a new demand. The spokesman reminded Pilate that this Jesus had prophesied his return to life on the third day. 'Command therefore,' he urged, 'that the sepulchre be made sure, * * * lest his disciples come by night, and steal him away, and say unto the people, he is risen from the dead: so the last error shall be worse than the first.' Whereupon the Procurator had acceded to the request. At his orders, a seal was placed upon the stone which closes the tomb, and I with my fellows constitute the special watch. Not that I look for anything to happen," he added.

"What indeed could happen?" I assented dully. I thanked Xenas and went away. The rain now hardening into sleet pierced like icy arrows through my somewhat inadequate clothing, chilling me to the bone. But my heart could grow no colder.

Back again at the pavilion I cast a hasty glance into that inner room. Judas still sits motionless, an inert huddle against the grey and streaming skies that are visible through the wide-open window. But I fancy that his shoulders are more heavily hunched than before, and at intervals a slow, convulsive shiver passes through them. I fetch another rug and throw it over him; then I retire to resume my own dreary vigil. The lightly constructed summer-house shakes in the steadily mounting blasts, while wreaths of vapour coil and slither like serpents through the wide cracks in the floor boarding and the rain beats a ceaseless tattoo upon the roof. Now the brief spring day has merged into the darkness of still another night—perhaps the eternal one. But one thought is in my mind—Jesus is dead.

I must have dozed fitfully; then full consciousness suddenly returns with the hearing of a cry, that familiar but always terrifying ululation of a soul in mortal pain. I spring to my feet and stand listening. Now it comes again and surely from without the house. With a bound I gain the inner room. It is empty;

Judas has disappeared.

The rain has ceased, the clouds have rolled away, and high in the empyrean rides the orb of the Paschal moon only a little past the full; so bright is its silvern light that everything is visible as in the day; far down the silent and deserted street moves a solitary figure, slipping and stumbling over the uneven pavement. Without hesitation I follow at my best speed.

But in vain. The man from Kerioth has had a long start and while I gain a few yards I cannot overtake him. He is heading directly for the high cliffs that overhang the valley of Hinnom, known in our Hebrew tongue as Gehenna, the accursed place. And ever and anon that cry comes pealing back, and the blood

thickens in my veins as it smites upon my ears.

On the brink of the abyss stands a single tree—an aspen—its

roots finding foothold in the crevices of the rock wall.

Judas has unwound his rope girdle and has fashioned it into a slip-knot which he places about his neck. Then, selecting a limb that extends over the rampart of the precipice, he attaches the

free end of the rope; I shout as I run.

Too late! With a convulsive bound, Judas springs forward and into empty space. Once more and for the last time I hear that unearthly cry, now ending in a strangled sob as the noose tightens about the throat of the man from Kerioth. The bough, unable to withstand the sudden and heavy strain, snaps clean away from the trunk, and the body of Judas Iscariot goes hurtling downward. I had stopped dead in my tracks, and now I catch the thud of still living flesh impinging upon the jagged rocks of the valley floor.

Crouching upon the edge of the escarpment, I force myself to look. Far, far below sprawls a shapeless, dark-coloured blob. For the moment I fancy that I can detect a slight movement in

the mass. But now it lies quite still.

The breath as though from a charnel-house chokes my nostrils; the blast as though from a furnace sears my lungs. I can discover not the faintest glimmer of fire in the abyss, and I tremble at the realization that I am face to face with that most mysterious and heart-shaking of physical phenomena—intolerable heat without light.

A violent nausea racks me. I turn and run, gasping and retching. Then, suddenly, I am shrouded in a veil of thick darkness; I pitch forward and downward; I am sucked down

into an inky flood; I see and know nothing more.

XXXI

STRANGE AND IDLE TALES

HEN I came to myself, I was lying on a couch in a great vaulted room through whose lofty windows the sunlight was streaming. Lucius Verus was standing at my side and he smiled back into my questioning eyes. "You were picked up by the night patrol," he explained, "and fortunately recognized by the legionaries as being one of my Jewish friends. No great harm done by your tumble, says the garrison physician."

"A little sore and stiff," I admitted. "but otherwise quite myself." I threw off the bedcoverings and found my feet; I swayed a little, but soon my head cleared and I drew in a long refreshing breath of the warm spring air. "What a glorious morning!" I exclaimed, and then I remembered and fell on

silence.

A servant presented himself, announcing that the under-officer Xenas had arrived and was awaiting the pleasure of the Tribune. "Show him in here," ordered Verus. He turned to me with a line of perplexity wrinkling the smooth expanse of his forehead. "There are rumours of strange happenings," explained my friend. "You see Xenas was in command of the guard which was yesterday placed at the tomb of your Jesus."

"I know, for I saw and spoke to Xenas in the garden."

"Well, very early this morning some women visitors to the sepulchre found the stone rolled away and the tomb empty."

I checked the exclamation that rose to my lips.

"Apparently the very contingency against which we attempted to take precautions has happened. The body of the crucified one has been stolen, taken away under the very eyes of my careless legionaries. By whom? Perhaps the disciples of the Nazarene—your intimate associates, my Nathanael."

"No hint of any such rash step came to me," I protested. "Moreover, our company was disorganized, scattered in every direction, hopeless in mind, and incapable of concerted action."

"Perhaps your uncle Joseph of Arimathæa, and his friend

Nicodemus may know something of the matter."

"My uncle is an honourable man; I will answer that he could

not have lent himself to any such proceeding. And, besides, you had a watch."

"Yes, we had a watch," agreed Lucius Verus glumly, "and I shall want a full explanation. But here is the fellow at last."

Xenas entered and stood before his commander; he was evidently ill at ease. "What have you to say about this business?" demanded Verus. "I want the whole truth."

"But there is so little that I can tell you," protested Xenas. "The guard of eight men and myself were on watch almost within an arm's length of the sepulchre. No one was sleeping, for the rain was cold and heavy and we had no shelter beyond our military cloaks." He stopped and fidgeted dumbly.

"Go on, man-and quickly."

"It must have been well on in the fourth watch. The rain had ceased, but there were flashes of fire in the western sky from time to time and the jarring of distant thunder. And then ——" Again Xenas came to a hesitating pause.

"And then?"

"There was a great earthquake, the ground under our feet reeling and cracking. The figure of a man, or perhaps an angel, stood at the entrance of the tomb. How can I describe the apparition, my captain, except that his countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow; for fear of him we did shake and were all as dead men.

"When we recovered our senses, there was nothing to be seen or heard. Nevertheless, the stone had been rolled away from the entrance and the sepulchre was empty. I mean there was nothing there but the linen clothes in which the body had been wrapped and the napkin which had been about, not lying with the other cerements but wrapped together and laid in a place by itself."

"But if the body has been stolen," objected Verus, "why should the grave-clothes have been removed and left behind? Such action would have been both unreasonable and unnecessary; moreover, the task would have taken an appreciable time to accomplish, thus adding to the danger of detection. There is no sense in this, Xenas."

"No, my lord; I, too, do not understand what it can mean. I

can only tell you what I saw with my own eyes."

"You may go," said Verus, and Xenas hastily withdrew.

"What do you think?" demanded the Tribune.

"What can I think?" I retorted. "But it seems to me as little more than an idle tale."

We went over the story told by Xenas in minutest detail, but

could arrive at no definite conclusion. Then I intimated to Verus that I would go into the city and see for myself if any new light could be thrown upon the puzzle. My friend nodded his assent and I sallied forth.

Such a beautiful day of returning spring; the sun so golden, the skies so blue, the wind so soft! Yet Nature's rejoicing awoke no echoes in my inmost heart. Jesus is dead—the one incontrovertible certainty. The grave takes and the grave holds and the mouths of the departed are estopped with dust.

At a street corner stood a number of excited citizens, and I

lingered for a moment to listen.

"I tell you," shouted one man, "that the soldiers have already made confession, saying: 'His disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept.' And so it has been reported to the Procurator." Ah, I could see here the fine hand of Annas, and possibly a bribe of money from Caiaphas. This was merely the obvious story, invented to avoid new and embarrassing complications. But, as I turned away, I continued to wonder and to question.

Presently I found myself on the Bethlehem road, walking between hedgerows where the buds of the caper berry were bourgeoning, while in the lush grass underfoot twinkled blue lupins. The borders of the path were edged with that low, green-veined

flower which we now call "Star of Bethlehem."

Someone was coming to meet me, someone who tripped over

the flower-spangled grass with the light foot of a fawn.

Were my eyes tricking me? I stood and stared; how could this be? Yet it was surely so; here was none other than that Mary of Magdala out of whom the Master had cast seven devils. It is true that the Magdalene had stood with the other women at the crucifixion—albeit afar off—for so it is recorded by Mark. But she had not come within my actual line of vision, and the last time I had fully seen Mary of Magdala was at Capernaum in the house of Simon the Pharisee where she had come with her flask of perfume to anoint the feet of Jesus. Clad in mean garments, her face marked by a crimson streak of unhealed wound, Mary had then looked far older than her actual years; how could there be any resemblance between that marred, prematurely broken woman and this radiant creature, garbed in a fluttering robe of sea-green silk with an overdress embroidered in iridescent peacock's eyes; this fair goddess with her ashblonde hair framing her face in a luminous halo, her star-sapphire eyes alight with the joy of youth and life—the incarnation, the very breath of Spring! Yet, this was surely Mary of Magdala, for no one who had ever beheld her could mistake that regal uplift of head, that exquisite blending of an ivory tower of neck into alabaster shoulders, that graceful carriage, and that springing step—Mary of Magdala, the very sum and substance of femininity.

Mary was smiling as she came to meet me. How strange when the Master whom she had loved had suffered under

Pontius Pilate!

Now she is standing before me and her lips are moving. Marvellous words! But once and again they are repeated:

He is risen!

Mary goes on to tell her amazing story. This very morning, as it began to dawn towards the first day of the week, she, with Joanna, and Mary the mother of James and Salome, had gone to the sepulchre in Joseph's garden, bearing balm and sweetsmelling spices that they might anoint the body of Jesus. But when they came to the tomb they saw that the stone had been rolled away, and that an angel in garments white and glistering was seated at the entrance to the burial vault. The women being affrighted bowed their faces to the earth.

"The angel spoke to us," continued Mary. "'Fear not,' he said, 'for I know ye seek Jesus which was crucified. * * * Why seek ye the living among the dead? * * * He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. * * * But go your way, tell his dsciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see

him, as he said unto you.'

"We turned and ran quickly to the gate of the garden; and there we met with Simon Peter and John. 'They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre,' I stammered, 'and we know

not where they have laid him.'

"I went again into the garden and waited amidst the deeper shadows of the plantation. Peter and John entered in turn into the tomb. Presently they reappeared, and even through my tears I could see that their faces shone with a strange new light as though reflecting something of the glory of the now fully risen sun. They departed and I remained there alone. And still I wept.

"Some impulse caused me to turn. A little distance away stood a man clothed in white; a stranger. Now he was speaking to me. 'Woman, why weepest thou?' he asked. 'Whom seekest thou?' Whereupon, supposing him to be the gardener, I an-

swered: 'Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away.'"

Mary stopped and in her eyes was the look of one who gazes into infinite distance.

"And then?" I urged.

"He said but a single word—my name—Mary——" Again her voice failed.

"Supposing him to be the gardener," I reminded her.

"Nathanael, do you not yet understand? It was he—the Master! I swayed towards him, putting out both hands. 'Rabboni!' I cried. But he drew back.

"'Touch me not,' he said, 'for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.'"

There was a ring of confidence in her voice, an assurance of joyful certainty in her bearing which momentarily impressed me; could this indeed be true? And then I remembered Mary's own words: "Supposing him to be the gardener," and again my heart hardened. I made no comment, and presently she went away between the sweet-smelling hedgerows towards the city, intent no doubt upon sharing her incredible experience with the other disciples. "And they," says Mark, "when they had heard that he was alive, and had been seen of her, believed not."

Now it was Simon Peter who came to meet me; there was a new light also in his eyes, and he walked with an assured and springy step, a wholly different man from the recreant who had denied his Master with an oath. "He is risen, as he said," he called out as we stood face to face.

"I know, I know," I answered impatiently. "But tell me."

"The women came running out of the garden. They were too excited to speak understandingly, but they agreed in saying that some prodigious thing had happened. John was with me and we made our way as quickly as possible to the tomb. John, being lighter of foot, outran me and was there first. Nevertheless, at the entrance to the sepulchre, he stopped and I went in before him.

"The tomb was empty, but on the burial ledge lay the winding-sheet; also the napkin that had been about the Master's head. Now here was something which I did not understand, something which even now confounds me."

"Yes?"

"The linen clothes were not disarranged as though they had been removed from the body and then flung aside. The cerements lay straight and smooth, not a wrinkle in their folds, and even preserving their original rounded form; it was exactly as though the body had exhaled from the graveclothes and left them lying there."

"You saw this-with your own eyes?"

"I did," answered Peter simply. "And there is something more. John was eager to spread the story abroad, and again he outdistanced me in leaving the garden. Then I saw what seemed to be a luminous shadow coming towards me. I recognized Jesus."

"You are quite sure?"

"How could I be mistaken? Moreover, the Master spoke to me."

"What did he say?"

Simon Peter's face flushed and his eyes were brimming. "I cannot tell you that," he said in a bare whisper. "I shall never be able to tell anyone. But I can say this much; the Master has forgiven me—fully—completely."

Now we re-entered the city, and presently Peter left me with the understanding that the Twelve should meet this evening in that same upper room where we had eaten the Last Supper.

I walked on in deep and disturbing thought; what would come of all this? Then I caught sight of a little group of my fellowdisciples; among them James and James Minor, Matthew and Andrew, Philip and Jude. Everybody seemed to be talking at once, every face was aglow with excitement, Philip's great voice boomed out again and again. It was easy to guess what had happened; Mary of Magdala had told of her visit to the empty sepulchre and of her alleged meeting with the resurrected Master. But there were doubt and uncertainty in that wagging of beards and waving of hands; plainly the disciples could not bring themselves to accept a prodigy so transcendent of all mortal experience. Yet I wondered a little, since it is part of our weak human nature to place credence in what the heart carnestly desires. I, being a philosopher, might be expected to preserve sanity of mind under any and all conditions, but these friends of mine were simple and unlettered men; why were they so slow to accept these incredible tidings of great joy? Obviously because they were incredible. And, per contra, they already showed signs of emotional instability; at any moment the pendulum might swing to the other extreme.

Avoiding the company of my fellow-disciples, I sought refuge in the pavilion of my uncle Joseph's garden. Over and over I revolved in my mind these extraordinary happenings. And out of the chaos but one clear incontrovertible fact emerged: the Master had voluntarily yielded up his life, and with him had died the very power which had recalled from the grave the son of the widow of Nain, the daughter of Jairus, and the brother of Mary and Martha. Here was still the world of living men, but it was now and forever a world without Jesus. A world without Jesus! But how could that be possible?

Wearied by my long perturbation of spirit, I dropped into a deep slumber which lasted until late in the day; when I awoke dusk had fallen.

As quickly as possible I made my way to the house of John-Mark's mother; the portress, recognizing me, gave instant admission and I ascended to that well-remembered upper room. The curtains had been closely drawn, since feeling against the followers of the Nazarene still ran high among our fellow-countrymen. The spacious apartment was in a semi-obscurity, the ordinary lighting having been replaced by one exceptionally large hanging lamp at the far end of the room; its downward rays, reflected by metal mirrors, lay in a pool of brilliant light upon the floor immediately underneath. In the illuminated circle sat my companions (Thomas being strangely missing and, of course, Judas Iscariot was not there); they had concluded a simple meal and the servants had just finished removing the used dishes; now they had retired and the Apostolic band remained the sole occupants of the chamber.

Only perfunctory greetings attended my entrance, it being apparent that some topic of transcendent interest was engrossing every mind. I perched myself on a stool immediately adjacent to the only door of the room and sat there silent and watchful. Of course, I could easily guess what my fellow-disciples were discussing—the astounding story of the empty tomb and the appearance of the Master to Mary Magdalene, to Peter and to John. But the period of uncertainty was by no means over; it might be the glorious truth, but where was the proof, the indubitable assurance to our perplexed hearts and questioning spirits?

And so we waited.

Something had happened. Simultaneously the sounds of physical movement and of men talking died away. A current of cool air fanned my cheek, and, almost unconsciously, I drew my stool aside so that it backed squarely against that closed and bolted door; now not even a mouse could enter without giving

positive knowledge. I dropped my eyes to the floor and kept them obstinately there.

Again the murmur of hushed voices. From where I sat I could catch no distinct words and I would not look up. But Luke and John have recited in detail the particulars of the marvellous visitation: how Jesus suddenly appeared in the midst of the disciples, and greeted them with the familiar salutation: "Peace be unto you"; how the Master asked for meat, and partook of a piece of broiled fish and of an honeycomb; how he breathed on them saying; "Receive ye the Holy Ghost: whose soever sins ve remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained"; how he showed unto them his hands and his feet still bearing the marks of the crucifixion nails. How glad were the disciples when they saw and knew their newly-risen Lord!

But what of me? As I have already said, I had caught only an unintelligible undertone of speech, but that incapacity might be ascribed to the confusion in my head and to the pounding and singing of the blood in my ears. But surely my eyes could not be deceived, and with a determined exercise of will I finally

forced myself to look.

Peter sits still, his face buried in his hands. Matthew and James are on their feet, their lips parted and their hands outstretched. Simon Zelotes has fallen to his knees. Andrew and Philip remain immobile as statues, but their eyes are sparkling with an adoring light. Jude and John stand in the inner circle, their attitude suggesting that they are welcoming a dear and long-expected guest. I gaze fully and steadily at that brightly illuminated patch of flooring which lies between them.

I see absolutely nothing. There is no one there.

I find myself alone in the silent street. The night wind turns the drops of sweat upon my brow into icy globules, but a consuming fire burns in my veins.

It is the end . . . of all things.*

* In the enlightenment of the subsequent revelation vouchsafed to me of Jesus as the Christ, I have pondered long and earnestly upon just what happened that night in the upper room. Assuredly my fellow-disciples believed that Jesus was present with them, and just as certainly I knew that my senses had not played me false; when I looked there was no one there outside of the disciples themselves. Yet we were both right and the answer to the enigma is not far to seek.

It was not the material Body of our Blessed Lord which, passing through the barred and bolted door, had stood radiant and glorious in the circle of light; that indeed I should have seen with my own material eyes. But Jesus had put off His earthly vesture; it was His spiritual Body which alone presented itself on that memorable night. My brethren of the Apostolic

XXXII

THE WALK TO EMMAUS

ID-AFTERNOON of the following day and I am sitting, inert and listless, in the cheerless front room of Joseph of Arimathæa's garden pavilion. I have made no effort to communicate with my uncle or with Lilli; what can they have to say to me or I to them?

A servant from the great house presented himself. "There is a man at the gate who wants to speak with you," he announced.

"He says he is called Ben-Cleopas."

"Ben-Cleopas! But I know nobody of the name," I began; then I checked myself, recalling that Cleopas was the proper cognomen of my fellow-disciple James Minor. Of course Cleopas could be none other than James the Less and I went to meet him.

James greeted me with his accustomed self-deprecatory bow. "You disappeared so suddenly last night," he explained. "I could not help wondering—if anything might be wrong; I mean if there were aught that I could do—you looked ill and——"

"I am perfectly well," I interrupted, "as you can see for yourself. But I have affairs of moment—what is it that you

want?"

"It—it is nothing," stammered the unconsidered one. "Nothing of the slightest importance. I only thought——"

"Well, out with it."

"You know the little village of Emmaus where there are the warm springs?"

" Yes."

"I had it in mind to go there and see if the hot waters might be of benefit to my bad foot. I can walk on it perfectly well, but there is still a slight swelling. It is worth a trial I think."

band possessed the humble and believing heart, and so they saw Him and were glad. But my heart was hardened, and, in consequence, my eyes were holden; therefore I saw Him not.

Is it to be otherwise to-day and in all the days that are yet for to come? The things of the spirit must be spiritually discerned, and only so. And that is the certainty, glorious and indubitable, which eternally remains. Yes, we were both right, but the higher lesson was still for me to learn—the truth of the Real Presence.

"And you propose that I should bear you company?"

James Minor blushed and boggled hopelessly.

"Why not?" I returned with an inexplicable revulsion of feeling. "My business can wait and the fresh air may dispel some of the phantasms which are still disturbing my brain. Yes, I will go with you."

James Minor thanked me with a shy smile (the most engag-

ing of his personal attributes), and we set forth at once.

Emmaus, situated in a small but fertile valley, lay to the northwest of Jerusalem. The distance was about threescore furlongs and it could be covered even by a leisurely pedestrian in less than two hours' time. The day was sunny and springlike, and insensibly I felt relief in turning my back on the cloudy, gloom-capped mass of the cruel, the blood-stained city of David. And, inevitably, as we trudged along the smooth, well-paved Roman highway, our talk trended towards the topic uppermost in both our minds—the postulate of a resurrected Jesus. It was apparent that James himself harboured no doubt of its truth; his eyes were filled with a sparkling light and joyful assurance; his attitude irritated me unaccountably.

"I grant you all that," I said impatiently. "I too have listened to the tales told by Mary Magdalene, by Peter, and by John. They agree in general, but there are many discrepancies in the details, discrepancies which must be taken into full ac-

count.

"Take, for instance, the several versions of the apparitions encountered at the sepulchre. There was an angel sitting there, 'his countenance like lightning, and his raiment white as snow'—that is one story. Another eye-witness asserts that it was merely a 'young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment.' Still another avers that 'two men stood by them in shining garments.' Mary of Magdala, looking into the sepulchre, saw not one but two angels, 'sitting the one at the head, and the other at the foot, where the body of Jesus had lain.' And a little later she sees and talks with some wholly unknown person, 'supposing him to be the gardener.' The two angels may have been a pure mistake, of course, but might she not have been equally self-deceived in recognizing this stranger as the Master? We must be honest with ourselves, my good James."

The face of James fell and his eyes were dark with questioning. But quickly he pulled himself together. "You have forgotten about last night in the upper chamber," he insisted. "Excepting Thomas, we were all there, including yourself, Nathanael. And we saw the Master; we saw him. It was surely

Jesus, for did he not show us his pierced hands and wounded side?"

"Visions, dreams, vain imaginations. Or in a single word—hallucination."

James stared at me in bewilderment.

"Perhaps I can make it clearer. Collective hallucination is a common phenomenon among a group keyed to an high emotional pitch and so predisposed to postulate entities which exist only in an overwrought imagination. You see what you desire to see; that is all."

James looked more perplexed than ever. But he rallied quickly. "You yourself were present," he asserted trimphantly.

"Yes, I was there in the room. But I had determined to keep my mind clear, my judgment unbiased, and my physical faculties in perfect functioning. Finally I looked up and I saw——"

"Yes—yes?"

"I saw nothing. There was no one there."

James staggered as though he had received a mortal blow; his face changed colour to a pale and parchment-like grey, the face of a man grown suddenly very old. I felt as though I had stricken down an helpless and fluttering creature, as though I had destroyed something very precious—the faith of a little child. But if the dream be false, can the awakening from it be too soon if life and reason are to survive?

We walked on in silence. By this time we were heading up the valley in which Emmaus lies, a lovely oasis of olive, lemon, and orange groves, with here and there gardens bright with spring flowers, and shady nooks along the course of a little stream whose waters were still perceptibly warm to the touch, the brooklet having its source in the hot springs whose medicinal qualities had conferred upon Emmaus a more than local fame; truly a delectable retreat among these bare and barren hills; an emerald of price set in silver, for already the fruit trees were in first leaf. The forest foliage, however, was not as yet in being, although the naked branches were beginning to reclothe themselves in a vesture of yellowish-green, a lacy, shimmering cloud of etherial grace and beauty. A world then of newly-created loveliness, but through which we passed with downcast spirit and lagging foot; Nature might rejoice, but we had no part in her pageant of gladness; as we walked we were sad.

Suddenly we perceived the figure of a man clothed entirely in white and moving along a bypath bordered by myrtles and the crimson glory of oleanders; now his course debouched upon our

highway and we were walking in company.

A stranger, and yet there was something in his bearing that drew and held our eyes. And presently he spoke, addressing himself to James. "What manner of communications," he asked, "are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad?"

"Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem," answered James, and hast not known the things which are come to pass in these days?"

"What things?"

Rapidly my companion proceeded to recount the heart-shaking events of the preceding week—the arrest, trial, condemnation, and crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth, a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people. Gravely the stranger listened to the word pictures of these never-to-be-forgotten scenes, but he said nothing. "To-day is the third day since these things were done," continued James. "Yea, and certain women also of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulchre; and when they found not his body, they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that he was alive. And certain of them which were with us went to the sepulchre, and found it even so as the women had said: but him they saw not." The voice of James trembled and broke on the final words: "But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel."

Now the stranger was speaking. "O fools," he said, "and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?"

Enthralled, we listened as the stranger went on to expound the utterances of the wisemen and seers concerning the promised and long-expected Messiah, the root and offspring of David, the

Bright and Morning Star.

Now we had entered into the village and the shadows were lengthening; the stranger made as though he were continuing still further on his journey. But James, breathing quickly in his eagerness, proffered a bold entreaty. "Abide with us," he begged; "for it is towards evening, and the day is far spent."

On the left of the highway stood the village inn, a little oblong house with thick walls over which the purple blossoms of a gigantic wistaria vine were clambering, an unpretentious place of rest and refreshment. "Abide with us," again urged my fellow-disciple and the stranger signified a gracious assent; we entered.

There is no one in the common room, a low-studded apart-

ment with a single window through which the beams of the western sun are streaming. Presently a servant enters, bearing a plate of wheat cakes and a flagon of wine, a simple meal for simple men; now he has withdrawn and we are alone.

The stranger has taken the central couch. He sits with the window at his back and his head is surrounded by a halo of sun-

light, a golden aureole. It is very quiet and very still.

The stranger takes up a piece of wheat cake. He bends his head in blessing and breaks it. Then he turns to James and gives into his hand a fragment of the bread; his lips move, but I cannot catch what he says.

Involuntarily I, too, have fallen to my knees. Again he is

speaking and now I hear clearly the enabling words: "Hoc est enim corpus meum—This is my body."

I put forth a shaking hand, receive the crumb, and raise it to my lips. And then, as the morsel of bread dissolves upon my tongue, I look up.

I see Him, I see Him plain. Not alone the Jesus whom I had loved, not alone the Master whom I had followed, but my resurrected, everliving Lord: Begotten of His Father before all worlds; Light of Light, Very God of very God; Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven; And was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary; And was made man.

There is no sound or movement in the room and the door still remains closed. James and I are once more alone; the Stranger has vanished out of our sight. But not until He had made Himself known to us in the breaking of bread, the Real Presence in the Christian Eucharist.

"Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift."

Quickly strapping on our sandals and tucking in our robes under our girdles, we grasp our staves and set out, in the fastfalling twilight, upon the homeward road; we must hasten to bring to our fellow-disciples the glad tidings of this wondrous epiphany.

James cannot contain himself for joy; now he turns to me, exclaiming: "Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?" I nod assent, but I remain tongue-tied and silent; just at this mo-

ment—the greatest in my life—I can find no word to say. But I smile back at my friend and brother, James; I too have discerned the Lord's Body.

We have delivered our message to the Twelve, and they share with us in our common gladness. Now at last, and in solitude, I am at liberty to go over, step by step, the happenings of our journey to that ever-sacred spot, the little village of Emmaus.

Why should we have met and talked so long a time with Jesus without realizing who He was? Why were our eyes holden

that we should not know Him?

Nor was this the only occasion upon which the Master chose to veil His radiant presence. On the triumphal entrance into Jerusalem, thousands, including His enemies, had gazed their fill upon Him. Yet, when the Temple guard sought to take Jesus at the Garden of Gethsemane, they could not be sure of His identity; the dark prescience of Judas had to be enlisted in the betrayal of the Master by the traitorous kiss. Mary of Magdala meets Him in the full tide of day at the sepulchre, but she supposes Him to be the gardener. Why all this uncertainty?

It is only conjecture on my part, but more and more I am inclined to believe that our Blessed Lord did not always present the identical appearance of personality; like to the chameleon, He would on occasion take colour and cast from His environment; I mean as regards the purely human element. Amongst His own countrymen, He was unmistakably the Jew; but when in company with our Roman overlords. He took on something of the Latin type of countenance; surrounded by the saffrontinted inhabitants of far Cathay, He might have been accounted a man of the yellow race; with the Hellenes, His lineaments were cast in the Grecian mould; in a crowd of Nubians, He might be found to possess truly negroid characteristics: Jesus, the living exemplar of our brother Paul's words: "God (who) giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; and hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth." Yes, akin to all and alien to none-Jesus, the central man of all the world; not alone the Master but the Elder Brother of each and every one of us.

Once again I repair to the house of Joseph of Arimathæa. My uncle himself meets me at the door and conducts me into the great hall of the palace. With grave attention he listens as I rehearse my varied experiences in the last few days—in particular the successive steps of that journey to Emmaus, and how He

had made Himself known to me in the Sacrament of the Eucharist. My uncle says no word as I finish the recital, but in his eyes are deep well-springs of peace.

"And now may I see Lilli?" I ask.

My uncle leads me to a closed door at the end of the hall. He

throws it open and motions me to enter-alone.

Lilli lays aside her embroidery-frame and comes forward to meet me, her white brow mantling to crimson with the quick confusion in her blood. I delay for an instant to close the door behind me.

Not even for you, dear reader, can I reopen that door.

XXXIII

WHEN THE HEAVENS OPENED

HE succeeding forty days have passed as in a waking dream, but the glorious certainty remains: He who was

dead is alive again, alive forevermore.

It was a week after that first Easter Day and all of the disciples, this time including Thomas, were assembled in our locked and barred place of meeting. And, behold, Jesus has added Himself to our company, although no eye had caught the manner of His coming.

Now Thomas had doubted when told of the empty tomb and of the risen Lord. "Except," he avowed, "I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, * * * and thrust my hand into his

side, I will not believe."

"Peace be unto you," said Jesus. And then, turning to Thomas the doubter: "Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side; and be not faithless, but believing."

Thomas looked and trembled. "My Lord and my God," he affirmed, and there were tears in his voice. But he did not offer

to touch the Master.

"Thomas," returned Jesus, "because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."

"Blessed are they"—you of the countless tens of thousands and of the innumerable generations that are yet for to come—"that have not seen, and yet have believed!" Ours indeed was the high privilege, ours the exalted joy of seeing with our own eyes the sacred person of our Blessed Lord, of hearing with our own ears the words that proceeded out of His mouth. But yours and yours alone is the blessing, secret, incommunicable, wholly precious—the especial grace of our Lord Jesus Christ in which even we of the Glorious Company of the Apostles have no part or share. Blessed are ye that have not seen, and yet have believed!

A little later and a few of us have gathered at the sea of Tiberias in His own country—Simon Peter, James, John, Thomas, Philip, James the Less, and I, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee.

"I go a-fishing," calls out Peter in cheerful invitation. We enter with him into Simon's ship and put out upon the deep. But although we toil all the night through, we have caught nothing.

In the half-light of breaking dawn the form of a man clothed in white is discerned upon the foreshore. But once again our eyes are holden, as we know Him not. Who is this Stranger?

"Children, have ye any meat?" comes the inquiry, and with

one voice we answer, "No."

"Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find," follows the confident command, and James Minor looks at me with a wild surmise in his faded eyes. But it is John, endowed with the inner vision, who answers. "It is the Lord!" he exclaims, and then again: "It is the Lord!" Simon Peter hears and stops only to gird about him his fisher's coat (for he is naked); he casts himself into the sea and swims lustily for the shore. We perforce delay, for suddenly the net has begun to drag heavily with the weight of the fishes that it now encloses. And it is but a little ship.

Now we come to land and see there a fire of coals and fish laid thereon, and close at hand a provision of bread. "Bring of the fish which ye have now caught," commands the Master; and Simon Peter, still wet and dripping, lends his mighty thews and muscles to the task of drawing the net to shore. Truly a wonderful catch, for it is numbered at an hundred and fifty and three of great fishes. Nor is the net broken. "Come and dine," says the Master, and once more (it is for the last time) we sit down to meat with Jesus our dear companion and friend, Master of men, and the Incarnate Word.*

The simple meal is at an end, and Jesus turns to Peter. "Simon, son of Jonas," He asks, "lovest thou me?"
"Yes, Lord," answers Peter: "thou knowest that I love thee."

*The question arises: Did He eat with us in actual fact, could that spiritual Body be really sustained by material food? John says simply: "Come and dine. * * * Jesus then cometh, and taketh bread, and giveth them, and fish likewise." But Luke, relating a previous incident, says definitely: "And they gave him a piece of broiled fish, and of an honeycomb. And he took it, and did eat before them" it, and did eat before them."

It annot did eat before them.

I cannot pretend to answer the query of my own knowledge; I was conscious of only one thing, that we were again of His Glorious Company. But I do recall an earlier occasion, when we were at Sychar in Samaria. "His disciples prayed him, saying, Master, eat. But he said unto them, I have meat to eat that ye know not of." And at that we may leave it.

"Feed my lambs." And then, for the second time: "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?"

"Yes, Lord," again answers Peter: "thou knowest that I love

thee."

"Feed my sheep." Once more, and, for the third time: "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?"

Bewilderment and pain are clouding Peter's face as he replies: "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee."

"Feed my sheep," says Jesus, and at last Peter understands. There had been three denials in the courtyard of the High Priest's palace, one of them with an oath. And for the second time did the cock crow.

And now by the azure deep of Gennesaret, in that first Easter season, Simon Peter is called upon to make triple affirmation of his love and loyalty to the Master. Lest he forget. But never

again does he forget.

Once more Jesus speaks to Simon Peter. "Verily, verily," He warns him, "I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not."

Peter yields to his old impulsive nature; he indicates John standing by. "Lord," he exclaims, "and what shall this man

do?"

"If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?" re-

turns the Master. "Follow thou me."

"Follow me." A long and difficult road could Peter foresee it, a path that ends at another cross standing stark and black on a hillside in the imperial city of the Cæsars. But there is gladness on Simon Peter's face as he sets forth upon that journey.

Now the angel at the sepulchre had said to the women: "Behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him: lo,

I have told you."

It is four weeks later and a beautiful day of full spring when the word comes that we shall assemble at that same mountain in Galilee from whence the Master delivered the discourse known to all who call themselves Christians as the "Sermon on the Mount." All of the Twelve are there and upward of five hundred of the brethren, among them Lilli, my bride of a fortnight. Following the winter rains, the bare, brown countryside has bourgeoned forth into a miracle of loveliness; the banks of every brooklet are edged with the tender, reviving green, and we walk upon a carpet of springing flowers.

The Master is speaking as one having authority. "All power," He says, "is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen."

In the silence but with great joy we receive the Master's commission. And that we may fully understand, He goes on to expound the prophecies and promises concerning Messias as given in the Holy Scriptures: "Thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things. And, behold, I send the promise of the Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high." Mysteriously the Master vanishes from our outward sight, but our hearts are full of His glorious presence and of His ordaining words as we retrace our steps to the city of David, the new Jerusalem.

The last of the Forty Days and we wait expectant in an open space near to the Upper or Benjamin Gate; suddenly we are made aware that the Master is once more of our company. He leads us forth from the city and out along the well-remembered road to Bethany, that same road upon which He had entered into Jerusalem to undergo the bitter pains and to achieve the glorious triumphs of His Passion. He speaks no word to any of us, and none among the disciples durst break that august silence; we are conscious only that once again we are walking with Jesus and learning of Him.

James Minor seems suddenly grown to be a very aged man. But his spirit remains unshaken, and there is an undimmed light of certainty and of happiness in his eyes; I recall the words of our Lord and Master: "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight."

James Minor, James the Little, James the Less! Least among us all in the sight of men, but I trow there is none greater in the kingdom of heaven.

"Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled." A few of the Master's friends are awaiting us as we arrive at a little eminence, bright with emerald verdure and prankt out with rainbow-hued blossoms, that overlooks the hamlet of Bethany. Nicodemus is there, Lilli and my uncle Joseph, Lazarus and his two sisters, Joanna and Salome; indeed all who have intimately known and especially loved Jesus of Nazareth. And James smiles as he picks out the faces of his son Reuel and of his daughter Mary of Magdala; they run forward to meet their father and he smiles again as he greets them.

The day is far spent and the westering sun is gilding with fresh glory the golden pinnacles of the Temple. The firmament is crystal clear save for one small but highly luminous mass of

vapour.

We sink to our knees as the Saviour raises His hands in blessing. But, even as we worship and adore, the little cloud descends and veils Him from our sight; now the translucent mist rises slowly to the zenith and He is parted from us; ascending into heaven, there to sit forevermore at the right hand of God.

Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in.

"Even so, come, Lord Jesus." It is James who is speaking, and so low are the words that they barely reach my ears. At the same moment his hand grows limp in my sustaining grasp and his body sags downward. Mary Magdalene and Reuel

spring to my assistance, and we catch him as he falls.

Lilli is bending over James lying quietly on his couch of fragrant thyme starred with bluebells and hyacinths; now she looks up at me through tear-misted eyes. "The first fruits of them that slept," she whispers. But it is the Magdalene who answers, and there is a triumphant ring in her voice as she recalls the words of the Master: "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. * * * Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God."

EPILOGUE

AYS our brother John, at the conclusion of his Gospel: "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name. And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose the world itself could not contain the books that should be written."

Three years have passed, my beloved John, since I sat with you in your house on the island of Patmos, and you laid on me the task of adding yet another to "the books that should be written" concerning the Person and Office of our Lord Jesus Christ. And now, with that task completed, I look upon the fruit of my labours, daring to hope that the words I have set down may in some degree aid in the establishment of the kingdom of God upon earth; may in some measure serve to present a veritable picture, to men of like mind with myself, of that Master whom we have loved, whom we have served; but whom to know aright is everlasting life.

There are still many lacunæ to be filled, many gaps to be bridged, but I can speak only of those things which I have seen with my own eyes and heard with my own ears. And so I offer no first-hand testimony upon the essential truth of the Incarna-

tion-the Virgin Birth.

But really great things need no scale-balance nor measuring-tape; they establish their own standard of values. And so I accept the story of the Nativity as told by our brother Luke: it is perfect beauty, and perfect beauty has only one foundation—absolute truth. Upon that incomparable narrative it would be presumptuous to attempt any improvement; but I may be permitted, in all humility, to offer a metrical version of that transcendent event.

A bright star shining On Bethlehem; A red rose twining From Jesse's Stem. A white frost crinkling
The browning wold;
A sheep bell tinkling
In far-off fold.
A mother trilling
Her lullaby;
A splendour filling
The midnight sky.
A silence stealing
O'er lea and ling;
A Wiseman kneeling
Before his King.

The Incarnation! But what of us who had no part nor parcel in that wondrous pageantry, what of those uncounted millions of true believers who should come after, born out of due time? Yet, like all the greater verities, the Incarnation endures, forever valid, everlastingly alive, wholly independent of the accidents of time and space.

Incarnate Love, we cannot see
The brightness of Thy face;
We may not with the shepherds watch
Upon this Eve of Grace.
Yet on our ears the echo falls
Of Heaven's triumphal strain;
And through our darkness floods the light
That shone on Bethlehem's plain.

No guiding star for us leads on
Across the desert old;
We bear no offerings of myrrh,
Of incense, or of gold.
And yet in faith we too may stand
Before that little door;
And with the Wisemen enter in
To worship evermore.

Again I make no conjecture regarding the silent years that he between the disputation of the child Jesus with the doctors in the Temple and the beginning of the Master's public ministry. A long period of probation, and yet not fruitless as a preparation for the great task of being about His Father's business; does not

Luke tell us that "Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man"?

The thaumaturgic works of wonder, the miracles of healing—what of these stumbling-blocks in our path? And yet, on the principle that the less is comprehended in the greater, the answer is not far to seek. If we can believe that Jesus Christ rose from the dead in His own power, we shall not be unduly exercised concerning the overshadowing by the Holy Ghost of Mary His mother; nor shall we quibble about the multiplication of the loaves and fishes or the walking upon the water, the giving of sight to the blind and of life to the dead. I indeed met with Jesus at Emmaus, and in the Sacrament of the Eucharist I was able to discern the Lord's Body. But He is not far from any one of us who truly seek Him.

The Resurrection is indeed the only sure foundation of our Faith. For as our brother Paul has said: "If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him." The Incarnation, the Crucifixion—these great affirmations would have been of no avail had not the stone been rolled away. And the Ascension could not have followed. And again: "If in this life only we have hope

in Christ, we are of all men most miserable."

"But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Yielding His gentle breath,
Sleeps He alone,
In that strait house of death,
Sealed with the stone.
Yielding His gentle breath,
Sleeps He alone.

How quiet lie the far Judæan hills
Beneath the argent arch of dawning day.
How strangely sweet the hallowed hush that fills
Alike the desert and the trodden way.
Silent He lies, His mouth estopped with dust,
While tumult dies, and jarring voices cease;
And swift upon th' obedience of the Just,
There follows peace, immeasurable peace.

Yielding His gentle breath, Sleeps He alone. With rosy glow the East is bright.
The tents of night are furled;
And, hast'ning to the realms of light,
Rolls on the orbéd world.
The Marys weep beside the tomb,
The warders keep the gates;
And, all unseen amidst the gloom,
The King of Glory waits.

But lo! the dawn, the portal shakes
Under a touch of might.
Within the darkened tomb there breaks
The very Light of Light.

He comes! and all the air is sweet
With odours of the Spring;
The starry lilies 'neath His feet
Are whitely bourgeoning.
He speaks! and ev'ry heart is thrilled
To wonder and amaze;
The earth is with His glory filled,
And heaven with His praise.

Clothed with the Easter sun He stands
Upon the vernal mead;
The wounded side, the piercéd hands
Proclaim the Lord indeed.
Accomplished now the great design;
From death and hell set free,
Behold the Star of David's line,
The Fruit of Jesse's tree!

Hark! how the hallelujahs high
Attend Him to His throne,
While saint and seraph make reply
In ceaseless antiphone.
To Thee and to none other we ascribe
The victory, the majesty, the glory.
Thine the dominion ransomed and restored,
And Thine the sovereignty of endless days;
Thine the eternal, undivided laud,
Yea, Thine alone the everlasting praise.

Anno Domini 101 and I sit alone in my chamber at Ephesus—alone, for it is now a twelfthmonth since Lilli left me. "Eternal rest grant unto her, O Lord; and may light perpetual shine upon her!" Yet my grandchildren are attentive to my needs, and since the day is raw and my blood is thin, a great fire of cedar logs is roaring away in the fireplace.

Being now warmed and comforted, the thought comes to me to undertake a task that has been too long deferred. For there still remains unopened a brass-bound chest belonging to my dear wife and containing the chiefest of her personal treasures. Hitherto I have not had the courage to examine the precious content of that coffer, but to-day I feel moved to make the survey.

The key is in the pouch at my girdle and the lock yields easily to its touch.

There are the customary trifles of dress and adornment so dear to the feminine heart, and I note particularly a dried sprig of myrtle and lilies from her wedding chaplet. And then, from the very bottom of the chest, I take a sandalwood box secured by a knot of faded blue ribbon; I open it.

A carefully folded square of diaphanous texture; yes, it is none other than the veil of Veronica.

How well I remember the one and only occasion on which I saw this bit of stuff—that moment in the passage of the Sorrowful Way when my Lilli came forward to render her bravely affectionate homage to the Saviour staggering under the burden of the Accursed Tree; how she offered her veil to Jesus that He might wipe the bloody sweat from His sacred Brow; how benignly He smiled as He handed back to its owner the sacramental piece of cloth! So many years ago, and never once had Lilli referred to the incident, nor could she bring herself to give sight of her treasure to any alien eye—not even to mine. And now it lies in my hand.

Slowly I unfold the packet and I behold the Likeness—the face of Jesus indelibly imprinted upon its smooth and silk-like surface; that Countenance more marred than any man and yet indubitably the presentment of Rex Regum, the King of Kings.

For a long time I sit motionless as the twilight gathers apace. A sudden flare of brightness, and I start in dismay; I realize that the priceless relic must have been displaced, by a wandering current of air, from my knees and wafted into the very heart of the blaze; now naught remains but a few fragments of feathery ash.

Yet I shall not grieve unduly. The last material link between the Master and the world He came to save has been broken, but the spiritual bonds grow even stronger with the passage of lustrum and decade; while we wait for His appearing in clouds and great glory to judge both the quick and the dead, and the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ.

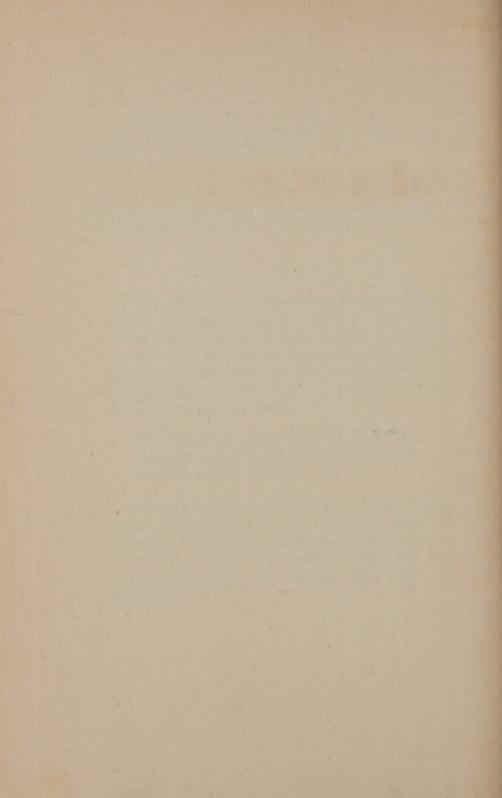
"Even so, come, Lord Jesus, * * * that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father."

Et (credo) in unum Dominum, Jesum Christum, Filium Dei unigenitum, et ex Patre natum ante omnia saecula. Deum de Deo; Lumen de Lumine; Deum verum de Deo vero; genitum non factum; consubstantialem Patri, per quem omnia facta sunt. Qui propter nos homines, et propter nostram salutem, descendit de coelis,

ET INCARNATUS EST DE SPIRITU SANCTO; EX MARIA VIRGINE: ET HOMO FACTUS EST.

Crucifixus etiam pro nobis sub Pontio Pilato; passus et sepultus est. Et resurrexit tertia die secundum Scripturas; et ascendit in coelum, sedet ad dexteram Patris: et iterum venturus est cum gloria judicare vivos et mortuos: cujus regni non erit finis.





Date Due Wr 20 42 Ap 6 - '42 (3)

